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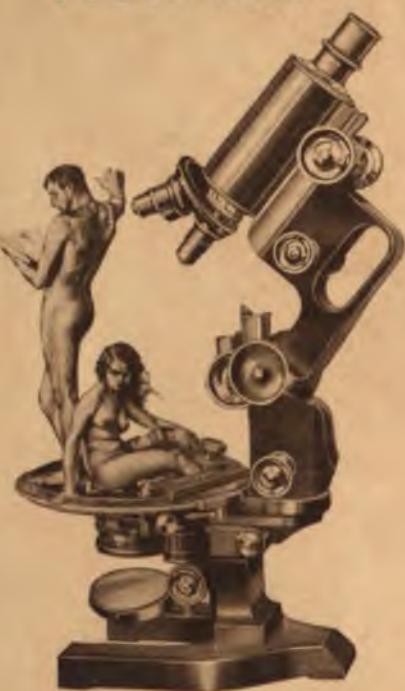
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Volume Three



THE
**ITALIAN
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ENGLISH BY

W. G. WATERS

CHOICELY ILLUSTRATED BY
E. R. HUGHES, A.R.W.S., LONDON

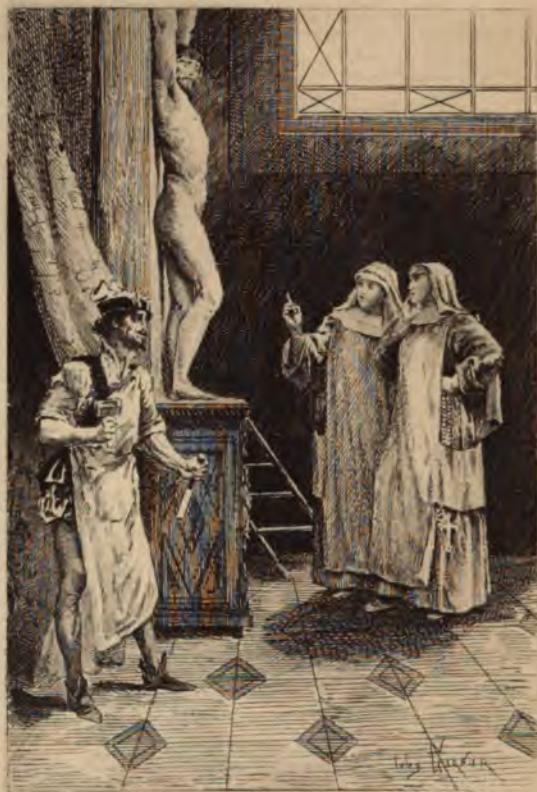
IN SEVEN VOLUMES
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THE
Facetious Nights
OF
STRAPAROLA

HOW FIRST TRANSLATED INTO
ENGLISH BY

W. G. WATERS

**The Nun's Inspection Of The
Priest's Crucifix**

TRANSLATED BY

JULIA CLÉMENCE

AND RECENTLY
Night the Ninth.

SIXTH FABLE

IN FOUR VOLUMES

Volume III.

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JANUARY 27, 1933

THE FACETIOUS NIGHTS
OF GIOVANNI FRANCESCO
STRAPAROLA *

CONSISTS OF AN EXQUISITE AND DE-
LIGHTFUL COLLECTION OF HUMOROUS
WITTY AND MIRTHFUL CONVERSATIONS
FABLES AND ENIGMAS INCLUDING SING-
ING MUSIC AND DANCING * * * * *

DURING THE THIRTEEN NIGHTS
OF THE CARNIVAL AT VENICE

AS RELATED BY TEN CHARMING AND ACCOM-
PLISHED DAMSELS AND SEVERAL NOBLES
MEN OF LEARNING ILLUSTRIOS AND HON-
ORABLE GENTLEMEN OF NOTE AT THE
ENTERTAINMENTS OF MERRIMENT AND
PLEASURE * * * * *

GIVEN BY THE PRINCESS LUCRETIA
AT HER BEAUTIFUL PALACE AT
MURANO * * * * *



Night the Seventh.





Night the Seventh.

IT was at an hour when a dusky cloud began to spread itself over all parts of the cool and distant west, and when the well-loved spouse of Dis spread far and wide the obscuring shadows, that the honourable and loyal band of gentlefolk repaired once more to the palace of the Signora, and, hand in hand, took their accustomed seats as they had done on the nights which were past. Then Molino, by the order of the Signora, caused to be brought forth the vase, and, having thrust his hand therein, he drew out first the name of Vicenza, then that of Fiordiana, then that of Lodovica, reserving the fourth turn for Lionora, and the fifth for Isabella. Thus, having settled the order of the story-telling, the

Signora gave the word to Lauretta that she should sing a song, and the damsel, without making any demur or excuse, at once began.

SONG.

Trembling I burn, and as I burn I freeze,
I hunger ever for a love
Which neither time nor fate can move.
I live bereft of ease ;
For that my heart now bids me speak, and then
My courage fails, and I am mute again.

Ah, many a time would I my woes have told,
To damp the flame that in me burns ;
But aye my courage backward turns,
Lest by my pleading bold
I should provoke your anger, and instead
Of favour it should fall upon my head.

Thus fear and my desire are aye at strife,
And surely fate a woeful end
To my long martyrdom will send,
And cut my thread of life ;
And for the love which sanctifies my breath,
How transient is the life, how sure the death !

As soon as this sweet and tender song
had come to an end, Vicenza, who was

designated by lot to take the first turn of the story-telling this evening, rose upon her feet, and having duly saluted the Signora, began to speak in this wise.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Ortodoxio Simeoni, merchant and noble citizen of Florence, goes to Flanders, where he becomes enamoured of Argentina, a courtesan, and forgets his lawful wife; but the wife by magic working is conveyed to Flanders, and returns to Florence with child by her husband.

T were long to tell how great is the love which a wife may bear to her husband, especially when she is mated with a man who is entirely to her liking. But, on the other hand, there is no hatred more fell than that of a woman who finds herself under the governance of a distasteful husband, for, as wise men tell us, a woman either loves or hates all in all. And this thing you will easily understand

if you will give kindly attention to the tale I have it in my mind to tell you.

There lived once upon a time, gracious ladies, a merchant called Ortodosio Simeoni, a man holding noble rank in the city of Florence, and having to wife a lady called Isabella, who was fair to see, of gentle manners, and holy and saintly in her life. Ortodosio, being strongly moved to embark in traffic, took leave of his kinsmen and of his wife, lamenting sore as he bade them farewell, and, having set forth from Florence, betook himself with his goods to Flanders. Having arrived in that country, it happened that Ortodosio, moved by fate, which seemed at first propitious, but proved evil in the end, hired a house opposite to that of a courtezan called Argentina, and he, being inflamed with an ardent passion for her, lost all thought of Isabella his wife and of his former life in guilty dalliance with her.

Five years had passed away since Isabella had received any news of her hus-

band. She knew not whether he was alive or dead, or in what land he was abiding. For this reason she was smitten with the greatest sorrow that a woman could feel, and it seemed to her continually as if the very life were being torn from out her breast. The unhappy Isabella, who was very devout and exceedingly reverent of all the ordinances of religion, went to the Church of the Annunciata every day, and there falling on her knees would pray to God with scalding tears and piteous sighs that He would grant her the speedy return of her husband. But her humble prayers, her long fasts, and her many charities availed her nothing. Wherefore the poor lady, seeing that neither for her fastings, nor for her prayers, nor for her almsgivings, nor for the many acts that she did for the welfare of others, did she obtain a favourable hearing, resolved to change her manner of living and to fix upon some other course. So, in the same measure as she had formerly been devout and fervent

time you will be in the greatest danger of death.'

To this Isabella answered: 'Do not doubt my constancy in any way, Gibrina, but be sure that if you were to conjure up before me all the demons which live in the centre of the earth, they would not affright me.' 'Undress yourself, then,' said the witch, 'and enter the circle.' Isabella, therefore, having stripped herself, stood naked in on

the day when she was born, and boldly entered the circle, which had been opened her book and likewise entered the circle, and thus spake: 'Powers of hell, by **Night the Seventh** hold over you, I conjure ~~you~~ instantly appear before me!' Astyros, Fafacello, and the other demon priests, compelled by the *conjurations* of Gibrina, immediately presented themselves before her with loud shrieks, and cried, 'Command us to do thy will.' Gibrina then said, 'I conjure and command you that, without any delay, you truthfully disclose to me

FIRST FABLE

brina ten florins; these the witch joyfully took, and, after having murmured certain mysterious words, she bade Isabella return to her at nightfall. When the appointed hour for the meeting had come, the witch took her little book in hand and drew a small circle on the ground; then, having surrounded the same with certain magic signs and figures, she poured out some subtle liquor from a flask and drank a drop of it and gave as much to Isabella. And when the lady had drunk it, Gabrina spake thus to her: 'Isabella, you know that we have met here to work an incantation in order that we may discover the place of your husband's present abode, wherefore it is absolutely necessary that you should be firm and not flinch at anything you may see or feel, however terrible. And do not let it enter into your mind to invoke the assistance of God or of the saints, or to make the sign of the cross; for if you do this you will never be able to recall what you have done, and at the same

time you will be in the greatest danger of death.'

To this Isabella answered: 'Do not doubt my constancy in any way, Gabrina, but be sure that if you were to conjure up before me all the demons which live in the centre of the earth, they would not affright me.' 'Undress yourself, then,' said the witch, 'and enter the circle.' Isabella, therefore, having stripped herself, stood naked as on the day when she was born, and boldly entered the circle, whereupon Gabrina opened her book and likewise entered the circle, and thus spake: 'Powers of hell, by the authority which I hold over you, I conjure that you instantly appear before me!' Astaroth, Fafarello, and the other demon princes, compelled by the conjurations of Gabrina, immediately presented themselves before her with loud shrieks, and cried, 'Command us to do thy will.' Gabrina then said, 'I conjure and command you that, without any delay, you truthfully disclose to me

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To Oddoosa

Right the Sensual

1902 1903

then you will be in the greatest danger of death.'

To this Isabella answered: 'Do not doubt my constancy in any way, Gabrina, but be sure that if you were to set me up before me all the terrors would fire in the centre of the earth, they would not affright me.' 'Undress yourself, then,' said the witch, 'and answer the smile.' Isabella, therefore, having undressed herself, stood naked as on the day when she was born, and boldly

The Demon Transporting Isabella To Ortodosio

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Night the Seventh hold over
FIRST FABLE instantly appear
before her. Asorath, Fafarello, and
the other seven princes, compelled by
the commands of Gabrina, immediately
presented themselves before her with
hostile stances, and cried, 'Command us
as do thy will.' Gabrina then said, 'I
beware and command you that, without
any delay, you truthfully disclose to us





where Ortodosio Simeoni, the husband of Isabella, now abides, and whether he be living or dead.'

'Know, Gabrina,' said Astaroth, 'that Ortodosio lives, and is in Flanders, and that he is consumed by so fierce a passion for a certain woman called Argentina that he no longer remembers his own wife.' When the witch heard this she commanded Fafarello that he should change himself into a horse and transport Isabella to the spot where Ortodosio was abiding. The demon, who was straightway changed into a horse, caught up Isabella and flew with her into the air, she in the meantime feeling neither hurt nor fear, and when the sun appeared he set her down unscathed in Argentina's palace. This done, Fafarello put upon Isabella the form of Argentina, and so complete was the resemblance that she no longer seemed to be Isabella but Argentina herself, and at the same time he transformed Argentina into the shape of an old woman who was invisible,

neither could she hear or see anybody herself.

When the hour for supper had come Isabella in her new guise supped with Ortodosio her husband, and then, having withdrawn together into a rich bed-chamber in which there was a bedstead with a downy bed thereon, she placed herself by Ortodosio's side, and he, while he thought he was in bed with Argentina, really lay with his own wife. And so ardent and impassioned were the tender caresses and kisses he bestowed upon her, and so close their embraces and kisses when they took their pleasure one with another, that in the course of that very night Isabella became with child. Fafarello, in the meantime, contrived to steal from the chamber a rich gown, all embroidered with pearls, and a beautiful necklace which Ortodosio had formerly given to Argentina, and when the following night had come Fafarello made Isabella and Argentina resume their own natural shapes, and at

daybreak, having once more transformed himself into a horse and taken Isabella on the saddle, he transported her back to Gabrina's house, at the same time handing over the gown and the necklace he had stolen to the old woman. The witch, when she had received the gown and the necklace from the hands of the demon, gave them to Isabella with these words: 'My daughter, guard these things with care, for at the right time and place they will be real proofs of your loyalty.' Isabella took the garment and the fair necklace, and, having thanked the witch, she returned to her home.

After four months had passed Isabella began to show signs of pregnancy, and her kinsfolk, when they remarked this, marvelled greatly, as they had always held her to be a virtuous and saintly dame. Wherefore they often asked her if she were with child, and by whom; to which question she, with a cheerful face, would always reply that she was

with child by Ortodosio her husband. But her kinsfolk declared this to be false, for they knew well enough that her husband had been absent from her for a long time, and was at the present moment in a distant country, and that, with matters standing as they did, it was impossible she could be with child by him. For this reason her kindred were greatly grieved, and began to fear the shame which should befall them, often taking counsel together whether they should not kill her. But the fear of God, the dread of the loss of the child's soul and of the murmurs of the world, and their care for the husband's honour, restrained them from committing this crime, so they determined to await the birth of the little creature.

When the time of her lying-in had come, Isabella gave birth to a beautiful boy, but when they heard of it, her kinsfolk were overwhelmed with grief, and without hesitation wrote to Ortodosio in the following words: 'It is not with the

design to give you annoyance, dearest brother, but in order to tell you the truth, that we write to inform you that Isabella, your wife and our kinswoman, has to our great shame and dishonour given birth to a son. Who his father may be we know not, but we would assuredly judge him to have been begotten by you had you not been away from her for so long a time. The child and his brazen-faced mother would have been before now deprived of life by us, had not the reverence which we bear to God stayed our hands on their behalf, for it pleaseth not God that we should stain our hands with our own blood. Set therefore your own affairs in order, and save your honour, and do not suffer this crime to remain unpunished.'

When Ortodosio had received these letters and the sad news therein written, he lamented greatly, and having summoned Argentina into his presence, he said to her: 'Argentina, it is absolutely necessary that I should return to Flor-

ence in order that I may despatch certain affairs of mine which are of no small weight. After a few days, when I shall have them set in order, I will come back to you forthwith. You, in the meantime, take good care of yourself and of my affairs, treating them in the same manner as if they were your own, and live merrily and always remember me.'

Ortodosio thereupon left Flanders, and with a prosperous wind sailed for Florence. Having come to his own house he was joyfully received by his wife; but as the days went on he was many a time seized with a diabolical inclination to kill her, and to leave Florence secretly, but when he considered the danger and the dishonour he would incur thereby, he determined to postpone his revenge to a more convenient season. So without delay he made known his return to her kinsmen, and after a while he sent out an invitation begging them to come and dine with him on the following day. When his wife's kins-

men, in response to the invitation given to them, arrived at Ortodosio's house, they were well received by him, and after their gracious welcome they all dined merrily together. When the dinner had come to an end, and the table cleared, Ortodosio began to speak as follows: 'Kind brothers and sisters, I think that the cause of our meeting here together must be plainly manifest to you all; wherefore it is not necessary that I should spend many words over the matter, but I will at once come to the subject which concerns all of us.' And raising his eyes towards his wife, who sat opposite to him, he said: 'Isabella, who is the father of the child which you keep in this house?' and Isabella answered, 'You are his father.' 'I? I, his father?' said Ortodosio; 'I have now been away these five years, and from the hour on which I departed you have not seen me, so how can you say that I am his father?' 'Still I declare that the child is your son,' replied Isabella,

were you ever in Flanders?' 'When I lay in bed with you,' answered Isabella. And then she told him everything from beginning to end—the place, the time, and the very words that had passed between them on that night. Ortodosio and her brothers, when they heard this thing, were filled with astonishment, but still they refused to believe her words. Wherefore Isabella, seeing the stubborn pertinacity of her husband, and knowing well that he did not believe what she said, rose from her seat, and having withdrawn into her chamber, she took the embroidered robe and the beautiful necklace and went back to the room where the company sat, and spake thus: 'My lord, do you know this robe which is so cunningly embroidered?'

Ortodosio, quite bewildered and almost beside himself at the sight, thus

answered: 'It is true that I have missed a similar robe, and I could never discover what had become of it.' 'Know, then, said Isabella, 'that this is the self-same robe which you lost.' Then she put her hand into her bosom and drew forth the rich necklace, and said, 'Do you also know this necklace?' And her husband, who could not deny that he knew it, said that it also had been stolen from him at the same time as the robe. 'But, so that my fidelity may be made clearly manifest to you, I will show you that I am worthy of your trust,' said Isabella. And having spoken thus, she caused the nurse to bring the child, which she carried in her arms to her, and when she had stripped off its white garments she said, 'Ortodosio, do you know this child?' And with these words she showed him how one of its feet was faulty, for the little toe was missing, and this afforded a true indication and absolute proof of her wifely fidelity, since Ortodosio's

foot was in like manner naturally wanting of a toe. When Ortodosio saw this he was so completely silenced that he could not say a word in contradiction ; so he took the child in his arms and kissed him and acknowledged him as his son. Then Isabella took greater courage and said, ' You must know, Ortodosio, my beloved, that the fastings, the prayers, and the other good works that I performed in order that I might have news of you, brought me fulfilment of my wishes, as you will presently hear. For one morning, when I was kneeling in the holy Church of Annunciata, and praying that I might have news of you, my prayer was granted, and an angel carried me invisibly into Flanders and placed me by your side in bed, and so close and loving were the caresses which you bestowed on me that night that I then and there became with child. And on the following night I found myself in my own house in Florence again, together with the things

I have just laid before your eyes.' When Ortodosio and his brothers had seen these trustworthy signs, and heard the words which Isabella spake with such great show of good faith, they all embraced and kissed one another, and in this wise, with all good feeling, they restored their affectionate relationship one with another.

And after some days had passed Ortodosio returned to Flanders, where he procured honourable marriage for Argentina, and, having laden his goods on a great ship, he returned to Florence, in which city he lived a long time in tranquil peace and happiness with Isabella and his child.

When Vicenza had come to the end of this pathetic story all the company applauded her warmly, and the Signora, with tears of pity in her beautiful eyes, signed to her to go on with her enigma, and Vicenza, without hesitation, gave it in the following words :

I am shining big and round
When I am most ardent found;
They take me and conceal me quite
Between two tender things and white.
Here and there I move about,
Until my strength is all gone out.
Eyes I have, though I see not;
A fellow bold of temper hot.
When coldest nips the winter frost,
Then I am wont to warm you most.

Vicenza's subtle enigma won the praise of all who heard it, but there was not one of them, however sharp-witted, who was not baffled thereby. Wherefore Vicenza, perceiving that all were silent, and that her riddle was yet unsolved, stood up, and having obtained permission, thus explained it: "The subject of my enigma, ladies and gentlemen, is the warming-pan, which, after it is filled with burning cinders, is placed between the white sheets. It has eyes, that is to say, the holes pierced therein, and it is used when the weather is coldest." Fiordiana, whose turn it was to tell the next story, did not

wait for the Signora's command, but with a smiling face began in the following words.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Malgherita Spolatina becomes enamoured of Teodoro, a hermit, and swims across the sea to meet him, but being discovered by her brothers and tricked by a false signal, she dies wretchedly by drowning.

 FIND that wise men have most aptly described love to be nothing but an irrational desire caused by a passion which has entered the heart through wanton thoughts. And its ill effects are: the squandering of earthly riches, the wasting of bodily strength, the destruction of the mind, and the loss of liberty. It knows no order, no reason; neither is there aught of steadfastness therein. It is the father of vice, the enemy of youth, the murderer of old age, and rarely or ever is its issue happy or prosperous. This is shown by the fate which hap-

pened to a damsel of the Spolatina family, who, being subjugated by love, ended her days most miserably.

Ragusa, noble ladies, is a celebrated city of Dalmatia, situated upon the sea. Not far from it there is a little island, commonly called the centre island, whereon stands a strong and well-built hamlet, and between Ragusa and the above-named island there is a rock on which is built a very small church and a little hut half covered with planks. This spot is barren and unwholesome, therefore nobody lived there except a hermit called Teodoro, who for the wiping out of his sins served very devoutly at this shrine. This man, as he had no other means of support, went sometimes to Ragusa, sometimes to the centre island, to beg. It happened that Teodoro having one day gone to the centre island to seek for his bread according to his custom, found thereon what he never would have sought. For there appeared before him a lovely and gracious maiden called Mal-

gherita, who, when she noted his handsome and seemly person, thought to herself that he was a man better fitted to enjoy human pleasures than to give himself over to solitude. Wherefore Malgherita took his image so ardently to her heart that day and night she thought of him and of nought besides. The hermit, who as yet recked nothing of the girl's passion, went on with his practice of begging, and often betook himself to Malgherita's house and craved alms of her. Malgherita, who was burning with love for him, always gave him alms, but she dared not disclose her love to him. But love, which is a shield for all who willingly serve under its rule, and never fails to point out a way by which each one may attain the desired end, gave at last somewhat of courage to Malgherita, and she accosted the hermit in the following manner: 'Teodoro, my brother, sole comfort of my heart, the passion which tortures me is so great, that if you will not have pity upon me

you will forthwith see me lying dead before your eyes. I am consumed with such ardent love for you that I can no longer resist these amorous flames. Come to my aid at once, so that you may not be the cause of my death.' And having said these words, she began to weep passionately.

The hermit, who up to this time had never suspected that she loved him, stood as a man bemused; but after a time he collected his wits and began to discourse with her, and such was the effect of their mutual converse that, letting go all thought of celestial things, they fell a-talking of earthly delights, and nothing now remained to them but to find the means of foregathering in order that they might accomplish their longed-for wishes. The young girl, who was very shrewd, said: 'My love, do not be afraid, for I will show you what measures we must needs take. This seems to be the plan which will best serve us. You will this evening, at the fourth hour of the

night, place a lighted torch in the window of your hut, and I, when I see it burning, will at once come over to you.' Teodoro replied: 'Alas, my daughter! how will you cross the sea? You know that neither you nor I have a boat to carry us over, and to place ourselves in the hands of others would be very dangerous for the honour and life of both of us.'

Then the young girl said: 'Let not any doubts trouble you, but leave the care of this matter to me, and I will find means of coming to you without fear of death or dishonour, for when I see the light burning I will swim over to you, and no one will know aught of what we do.' To this Teodoro made answer: 'There is surely great danger that you will be drowned in the sea, for you are very young and of no great strength, and the journey is long and your breath might easily fail you, and you be overwhelmed.' 'I have no fear,' said the maiden, 'that my strength will

not carry me through, for I will swim as well as ever fish swam.' The hermit, seeing her firm determination, was satisfied, and when the dark night had come, according to the plan fixed upon, he lighted his torch, and, having prepared a white towel, he awaited the coming of the maiden he longed to see with the greatest joy. She, when she saw the light burning, was filled with delight, and, having stripped off all her clothes, went barefooted and clad only in her shift to the seashore. There, when she had pulled her shift off her back, she entwined it about her head, and then committed herself to the sea, and in swimming she made such dexterous play with her arms and her legs that in less than a quarter of an hour she had gained the hut where the hermit awaited her. When he saw the maiden he took her by the hand and led her into his ill-covered hut, and, having taken the towel, which was white as snow, with his own hands he dried her



Illustrations by A. W. H. M.

Illustrations by G. S. M.

Illustrations by F. G. M.

Malherita And The Hermit

Night the Seventh

SECOND FABLE





all over; then he led her into his little cell, and, having placed her on the small bed, he lay down beside her, and together with her he tasted the supreme enjoyment of love.

The lovers remained two full hours in sweet conversation and close embraces; then the young girl, quite satisfied and happy, departed from the hermit, giving him however a promise that she would return to him. Malgherita, who learned full soon to delight in the sweet entertainment provided for her by the hermit, swam over to him every time she saw the light burning.

But that evil and blind Fortune, she who causes kingdoms to fall and upsets all human plans, she who is the enemy of the happy, would not long suffer this young girl to enjoy the company of her dear lover; this Fortune, as though she were envious of the happiness of others, intervened and shattered all their schemes. For one night, when the air was filled with baffling mists,

Malgherita, who had marked that the light was burning, threw herself into the sea to cross over, but as she swam it chanced that she was seen of certain fishermen who were plying their trade in those parts. The fishermen, who took her to be a fish that was swimming past, began to watch her intently, and soon discovered her to be a woman, and furthermore observed that she entered the hermit's hut. They were very much astonished at this thing, and, having taken their oars in their hands, they rowed towards the shore, where, lying in ambush, they waited until such time as the girl, having come out of the hut, should swim back towards the centre island. But the poor girl could not conceal herself closely enough to avoid being seen by the fishermen, and they, having narrowly observed her, discovered who she was. And oftentimes after this they watched her make the perilous journey, and soon understood the signal of the lighted torch, whereupon they took

counsel whether they should or should not keep the matter a secret. But then when they considered the disgrace which might fall upon the honourable family, and the risk of death which Malgherita ran, they changed their minds and determined to disclose the whole matter to her kinsmen; so, having gone to the house of Malgherita's brothers, they told them all the story from beginning to end. The brothers, when they heard and understood this sad news, would not believe it unless they should see it with their own eyes. But later on, when they were fully assured of the fact, they made up their minds that she must die, and after they had taken deliberate counsel together, they set to work to carry out their full intent. Whereupon the younger brother, when the darkness of night began to fall, got into his boat and went quietly and alone to the hermit's hut, and begged him that he would not deny him shelter for this one night, forasmuch as a certain thing had happened to him,

on account of which he stood in great danger of being taken and put to death by justice. The hermit, who knew him to be a brother of Malgherita, received him benignantly and embraced him, and all that night he remained with the young man, talking over divers questions and disclosing to him all the miseries of humankind, and the grave sins which corrupt the soul and make it a servant of the devil.

Whilst the younger brother remained with the hermit, the other two secretly issued from their house, and, having taken a small sail-yard and a torch, they entered a boat and rowed in the direction of the hermit's hut, and, when they had come near it, they set the sail-yard upright, and tied the lighted torch to the top of it, awaiting what might happen.

Malgherita, when she saw the burning light, swam out boldly into the sea, according to her wont, and struck out in the direction of the hut. The brothers, who kept quite quiet, no sooner heard

the movement which Malgherita made in the water than they took their oars in hand and silently rowed away from the hut, bearing with them the torch still burning. They rowed so gently that she heard nothing, neither could she see them on account of the darkness. The poor young girl thus perceived nothing but the lighted torch burning in the boat, and following this, she swam onward and onward. But the brothers put off so far from the land that they took her at last out into the high seas, and then, having taken down the sail-yard, they extinguished the light.

The unhappy girl, being no longer able to see the light, knowing nothing as to where she was, and already wearied with her long swimming, was quite bewildered, and finding herself beyond all human help, gave herself over for lost, and like a ship cast away she was soon swallowed up by the sea. The brothers, who saw that there was now no more chance of her escape, left their unfortu-

nate sister in the midst of the waves and returned to their home. The younger brother, when daylight had appeared, gave due thanks to the hermit for his kind welcome, and departed from the hut.

Already the sad news had spread throughout the village that Malgherita Spolatina had disappeared, and on this account the brothers feigned to feel the greatest grief, but in their secret hearts they rejoiced immeasurably. The third day had scarcely passed when the dead body of this unfortunate girl was washed ashore by the sea near the hermit's hut, and when he had cast his eyes upon it and recognized it, he would fain have made an end of himself. But having taken hold of the body by the arm (nobody seeing him), he drew it out of the sea and carried it into his hut, and having thrown himself down by the corpse, for a long time he wept over it, and bathed her white bosom with abundant tears, and called upon her many times,



George Deacon's
Dead Body

Illustration by George Farquhar

George Farquhar

size sister in the midst of the waves had returned to them home. The young brother, when daylight had appeared, gave due thanks to the hermit for his kind welcome, and departed from the hermit.

Already the tall man had gone throughout the village that Malgerita Spaderna had disappeared, and in the afternoon the brothers figured to feel the

Teodoro Discovering Malgerita's Dead Body

Night the Seventh

SECOND FABLE

It is open upon it
that the man, as we would not have
done, would have
done of himself. But having
discovered the body by the sea (no
longer seeing him), he drew it out of the
sea and carried it into his hut, and having
covered himself down by the corpse,
for a long time he wept over it, and
bathed her white bosom with abundant
tears, and called upon her many times,





but all in vain. And after he had wept his fill he determined to give her honourable sepulture, and to speed her soul with prayers and fastings, and with other good works. Then, having taken the spade with which he was wont to dig in his garden, he made a grave near his little church, and, weeping plentifully, he closed her eyes and her mouth. Next, he made a garland of roses and violets, and this he placed on her head; then he gave her a last benediction, and kissed her, and put her into the grave, which he filled up with earth. And in this wise the honour of the brothers and of the lady was preserved, nor was it ever known what had become of her.

Many times in the course of this sad story had the ladies been moved to tears, and had been obliged to wipe their eyes with their kerchiefs. But the Signora found herself altogether mastered by grief on account of the sad ending of Fiordiana's fable, so she gave order to Molino to give them some merry enigma in order

that pleasure might somewhat temper their present pain, and he without demur spake as follows :

Nurtured in the kindly nest
Of a maiden's glowing breast,
There I take my birth, and soon,
As reward for such a boon,
I labour hard by day, by night,
To bear her offerings rich and bright.
But as the moving stars fly past,
I'm shut within a prison fast.
Freed therefrom, I seek my mate,
And, bound to her by hidden fate,
That life may more abound thereby,
Embrace my doom and willing die.

Few or any of the listeners were able to fathom the meaning of Molino's learned riddle, and he, when he marked that they were all perplexed and at a loss, said : " The true interpretation of my enigma is this : in the month of May it is the custom of young maidens to place in their bosoms eggs of the silkworm, which there come to life, and in return for this boon the worms give the silk which they

spin. Then the worm is shut up in the cocoon, and when it issues from this it is united with its mate, which lays more eggs, and then dies voluntarily." The solution of this intricate riddle appeared to the company to be no less clever than beautiful, and won unanimous praise. Then Lodovica, to whose lot it fell to relate the third story, stood up, and, having made a bow to the Signora, told the story which follows.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Cimarosta, a jester, goes to Rome, and confides a secret to Pope Leo, thereby procuring a beating for two of the private chamberlains.

HE fable, gracious and lovesome ladies, which has been so ingeniously told by Fiordiana, has given occasion for the shedding of many tears on account of its woeful nature, but as this is a spot better suited for laughter than for weeping,

I have decided to tell you one which I hope will give you no small pleasure, for I will let you hear therein concerning the buffooneries done by a Brescian who went to Rome, thinking that he was about to become a rich man, but, failing in his schemes, ended his days in poverty and misadventure.

In the city of Brescia, which is situated in the province of Lombardy, there once lived a jester, Cimarosta by name, a very cunning fellow, but held in mean repute by his neighbours for the reason that he was much given to avarice, a vice which mars everything it touches, and also because he was a Brescian himself, and no prophet is well received in his own country.

When Cimarosta saw that he did not get the full appreciation which it seemed to him that his witty sayings merited, he was very indignant in his heart, and, without making his intentions known to anyone, he departed from Brescia and took his way towards Rome, thinking

that he might there gather together a great sum of money, but things did not happen to him exactly according to his wishes, for in Rome men do not care for sheep that have got no wool.¹

The supreme Pontiff of Rome in those days was Leo, a German by birth, who, although he was a man of great learning, was prone at certain times (after the manner of divers great lords) to take delight in buffooneries and other diversions of a like character, but it was rare indeed that any jester would receive from the Pope any guerdon for his fooling. Cimarosta, who had no acquaintances in Rome, and did not know by what means he should bring himself to the notice of the Pope, made up his mind that he would go to him in person and exhibit before him some proof of his wit. Wherefore he took his way to the palace of St. Peter's, where the Pope dwelt, and directly he entered therein he was

¹ Orig., *percioche la città di Roma non vuole pecora senza lana.*

accosted by a chamberlain, a stout fellow with a thick black beard, who called out to him, 'Where are you going?' And having put his hand on Cimarosta's breast he pushed him back. Cimarosta, when he saw the ruffled humour of the chamberlain, said with an humble tone of voice, 'Ah, my brother, do not deny me entrance, I beg you, for I have some most important questions to discuss with the Pope.' Then the chamberlain said, 'Get you away from this place as quickly as you may, otherwise you will get for yourself a reward which you will not find to your taste.' Cimarosta, however, still insisted on entering the palace, declaring over and over again that the business he wanted to discuss with the Pope was of a most important character. The chamberlain being at last persuaded by Cimarosta's pertinacity that some weighty business was afoot, and furthermore reckoning that an affair of this sort would of a certainty bring to Cimarosta a liberal reward out of the holy father's purse,

agreed to let him in, but before opening the door he struck a bargain with him, which was that Cimarosta should, on his return from the Pope's presence, hand over to him the half of what had been awarded him, and Cimarosta promised readily that he would abide by this agreement.

Cimarosta, having passed over the threshold, entered into a second chamber, which was in the custody of a very affable young man, who, when he saw him, rose from his seat and came towards him, saying, 'What would you here, my friend?' And to him Cimarosta replied, 'I would speak with the Pope.'

To this the young man made answer, 'You cannot speak with him at present, for he is engaged with other affairs, and heaven knows when it will be convenient for you to have speech with him.' 'Ah,' cried Cimarosta, 'do not keep me back, for the things that I have to tell him are of the highest importance.' When the young man heard these words, there

came into his mind at once the same notion which had suggested itself to the other chamberlain, and he said, 'If you wish to go in you must promise to hand over to me the half of whatever His Holiness may give you.' And Cimarosta readily promised to do this.

When Cimarosta at last made his way into the sumptuous papal chamber, his eye fell first upon a German bishop, who was standing in a corner of the room at some distance from the Pope, and, having gone up to this prelate, he began to talk to him. The bishop, who had not the Italian idiom, spoke now in German, now in Latin, and Cimarosta, feigning to speak German (after the manner of buffoons), answered him, blurting out at random any words that happened to come to his lips. And they spoke in such a fashion that neither the one nor the other understood a word of what was being said. The Pope, who was at the time occupied in talking with a cardinal, said to the latter, 'Do you hear the

chattering that is going on over there?' 'Yes, holy father,' replied the cardinal. And when the Pope, who knew all languages perfectly, saw plainly that Cimarosta was playing a joke on the bishop, he was mightily amused thereat, and laughed aloud at the pranks which were going on. But in order that he might not spoil the sport by stopping the joke, he turned his back upon them and pretended to talk with the cardinal on other matters.

Cimarosta and the bishop, therefore, having gone on with their wrangle for some time without one understanding a word which the other said—the Pope laughing heartily at the jest meantime—the buffoon at last said to the bishop in his mock Latin, 'From what city do you come?' The bishop answered, 'I am from the city of Nona.' Then Cimarosta said, 'Monsignor, it is no longer wonderful to me that you do not understand my language, nor I yours, for, you see, you come from the Nones and I

come from the Complines.¹ When the Pope heard this prompt and witty answer, he began to laugh so heartily with the cardinal, whom he was holding in conversation, that he almost burst his sides. Then, having called the fellow up to him, he asked him who he was, and whence he came, and what was his business. Cimarosta, throwing himself down upon the ground before the holy father and kissing his feet, told him that he was a Brescian named Cimarosta, and that he had come from Brescia to Rome in order to obtain a favour of His Holiness. The Pope said, 'Ask me whatever you desire.' 'I ask nothing else of your Holiness,' said Cimarosta, 'than twenty-five of the sharpest whip-cuts that are to be had.' When the Pope heard this foolish request he was mightily astonished and laughed heartily thereat, but still Cimarosta went on begging persistently that this boon and no other

¹ Orig., *Se voi siete da Nona, ed io sono da Compieta*
— an attempted witticism on the canonical hours.

should be granted to him. The Pope, seeing that he was firm in this his wish, and being fully persuaded that he really meant what he said, bade them call a stalwart young fellow, to whom he gave orders then and there to lay on Cimarosta's back twenty-five good sharp cuts with a lash, and to put his whole heart into his work. The young man, obedient to the Pope's commands, straightway stripped Cimarosta as naked as on the day he was born; then he took a tough lash in his hand, and set himself to carry out the command given to him by the Pope. But Cimarosta with a loud voice cried out, 'Stop, stop, young man, and do not beat me!' The Pope who saw this was part of the antics of the fellow, and did not know what he was about to do next, burst into loud laughter and commanded the youth to hold his hand.

When the young man had lowered his lash, Cimarosta, all naked as he was, knelt down before the Pope and with a

flood of hot tears exclaimed: 'Holy father! there is nothing in this world which is more displeasing to God than broken faith. I, for my part, will keep my troth if your Holiness will give me aid and countenance. I, much against my will, promised to hand over, first to one of your chamberlains, and then to another, half of whatever your Holiness might be pleased to give me. I asked you for twenty-five sharp cuts with a lash, and you, in your natural kindness and courtesy, have consented to let me have them. Will you, therefore, in my name, give twelve and a half blows to one of the chamberlains and twelve and a half to the other. By this means you will be granting my request, and I shall perform my promise.'

The Pope, who as yet scarcely understood the drift of this matter, cried out, 'What is the meaning of this?' Then Cimarosta said, 'Holy father, when I wished to come in here and present myself to your Holiness, I was forced most

unwillingly to chaffer and bargain with two of your chamberlains, who made me bind myself by oath and promise that I would hand over half of whatever your Holiness might of your beneficence grant to me. Wherefore, as I do not wish to fail in my given promise, I feel I am bound to hand to each of them his due share, and I will myself forego any part of the reward.'

When the Pope heard what Cimarosta said, he was greatly angered, and caused the chamberlains to be brought before him forthwith, and commanded that they should be stripped and beaten according to the terms of the bargain made between them and Cimarosta. This order was promptly carried out, and when the young man had given each one of them twelve stripes, there yet remained one more stripe due to somebody to make up the full number of twenty-five. Wherefore the Pope commanded that the chamberlain who had been flogged last should have thirteen. But

Cimarosta, interrupting him, cried out, 'That would hardly be fair, for in that case he would get more than I promised him.' 'What shall we do, then?' said the Pope. Cimarosta answered, 'Have them both tied together on one table, with their backsides uppermost, and then let the young man lay on to them together a single stroke, and a good sound one, that will include the two. And thus each one will receive his share, and I shall have righteously discharged my debt.'

When Cimarosta had left the Pope's presence without any reward in his pocket he was soon surrounded by a crowd of people who had heard rumours of the ready wit he had displayed. And a certain prelate, who was a good fellow, having come up to him, said to him, 'What is the latest news?' And Cimarosta immediately replied, 'Nothing less than that to-morrow we shall hear cries of peace.'¹ The prelate, who

¹ Orig., *dimane si criderà la pace.*

could not believe this (nor was there any reason why he should believe it), said to Cimarosta, ' You do not know what you are saying, for the Pope has been at war with France for a long time, and until now we have not heard a word about peace.' And after they had held a long dispute together Cimarosta said to the prelate, ' Messer, are you willing to make a wager with me of a good dinner that to-morrow there will not be cries of peace?' ' Yes,' answered the prelate. And forthwith in the presence of several witnesses they each deposited ten florins with the understanding that the loser should bear the cost of the dinner. Then the prelate took leave of Cimarosta in a merry humour, thinking that on the morrow he would hold high revel at the latter's cost. But Cimarosta, who in the meantime was not asleep, went to his lodgings, and having found the master of the house, said to him, ' My master, I would that you would do me a favour which may

turn out to be both to your pleasure and to my profit.' 'What do you wish me to do?' said the landlord. 'Do you not know that you have but to command me?' 'I ask nothing less of you,' said Cimarosta, 'than that tomorrow your wife should don the old suit of armour which you have in your chamber, and you need not fear that aught of harm or dishonour will befall her, but leave the rest to me.'

It chanced that the landlord's wife was named *Madonna Pace*.¹ The armour Cimarosta had spoken of was that of a powerful man, very rusty, and of such great weight that anyone being dressed in it and stretched upon the ground, could not possibly raise himself without help, however valiantly he might strive. The landlord, who was a merry soul, and one well liked, knew Cimarosta to be full of banter, and for that reason wished to comply with his request.

¹ *Mistress Peace.*

When the morrow had come, the landlord made his wife put on all the armour, and, thus arrayed, he bade her lie down on the floor of her room. Then he said to the woman, 'Stand up now on your feet,' and she several times tried to get up, but could not move. Cimarosta, seeing that his plan was in a fair way to come to the issue he desired, said to the landlord, 'Let us go away.' And having closed the door of the room, which looked out on the public street, they departed. The landlord's wife, when she perceived that she was shut up alone in the room, and unable to rise, feared greatly that some untoward mishap was about to bechance her, and began to cry out with a loud voice. The neighbourhood, hearing the outcry and the clash of arms, ran to the landlord's house. Cimarosta, when he heard the tumult made by the men and women who had flocked together, said to his host: 'Do not move nor speak, but leave everything to me, for the

laugh will soon be on our side.' So he went down the stairs and into the street, and asked this man and that who it might be who was screaming so vigorously, and they all with one voice replied, 'Do you not know they are the cries of Madonna Pace.' And having had these words repeated to him twice or thrice, he called several men to bear witness that they had heard the cries of Madonna Pace.

When the hour of the compline had passed, the prelate came and said, 'You have lost your wager of a dinner, brother, for so far we have heard no cries of peace.' 'I take it to be otherwise,' said Cimarosta. So between them there arose a sharp contention, and it became necessary to find a judge who should decide the case. And this judge, when he heard the reasoning of one side and of the other, and listened to the witnesses, who roundly declared that the whole neighbourhood had recently heard the cries of Madonna Pace, sentenced the prelate to pay for the feast.

Two days had scarcely gone by when Cimarosta, as he was passing through the city, encountered a Roman lady who was very rich, but ugly as the devil. This woman had managed to get a handsome youth for a husband, to the astonishment of all those who knew her. It happened that at the same moment a little she-ass passed, and Cimarosta turning to her said: 'Ah, poor little thing! if you had as much money as this woman you could easily get married.' It chanced that this saying was overheard by a gentleman who was a kinsman of the ugly woman, and he took a stick and gave Cimarosta such a blow on the head that he had to be carried by his arms and his legs back to his landlord's house.

The surgeon, in order that he might the better dress his wounds, had his head shaved. His friends when they came to see him said: 'Cimarosta, what have they done to you? Your head has been shaved.' And he said: 'By my faith, be silent and do not make mock of me,

for if the skin of my head were of satin¹
or of damask it would be well worth a
florin an ell, and now the whole of me
is worth nothing.'

Now when the last hour of his life
was approaching, a priest came to give
him extreme unction, and when he was
about to put the oil on his feet, Cima-
rosta said: 'Alas, good sir! do not oil
me any more. Do you not see that my
life is running off the reel fast enough?'
All the bystanders when they heard this
began to laugh, and thus Cimarosta, jest-
ing even to the last moment of his life,
died, and in this wise he and his buffoon-
eries came to an unfortunate end.

Old was I before my day,
And when in infancy I lay,
I was a man-child strong and bold.
First I was plunged in water cold;
Then racked with torture fierce and fell;
Next scorched with heat. Then, sooth to tell,
Again with irons torn and rent;
Then out for homely service sent.
Useful my lot, though scant my fame;
Now if you can declare my name.

¹ *Raso*, "satin" or "shaven."

This subtle enigma commanded no small approbation from the whole of the honourable company, but not one listener was found clever enough to solve it. Whereupon Lodovica, like the prudent girl she was, as soon as she saw that her riddle was likely to remain unguessed, said with a smile: "It is not because I am anxious to give a lesson to others, but because I do not wish to let this present company be any longer in suspense, that I propose to explain the meaning of the enigma I have just spoken. This, unless I am greatly in error, can be taken to mean nothing else but the flax. Because this plant is brought forth by its mother, that is to say the earth, of the male sex, then it is placed in cold running water to be steeped, then dried by the sun, next in a warm place, and heavily beaten by a mallet, and finally torn to pieces with iron, that is the shuttle, and also with thorns."

Everyone was greatly pleased with this explanation, and held it to be most

learned. Then Lionora, who was seated next to the speaker, rose to her feet, and having made due salutation began her fable.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Two brothers live together in great amity. After a time one of them desires a division of their goods; the other consents thereto, provided his brother will settle how this division is to be made. Whereupon the first brother makes the division, but fails to satisfy the other.

HE tender love which a father bears towards his children, beloved and gracious ladies, is indeed great; great, too, is the affection of one close and faithful friend for another, and great the attachment which a loyal citizen feels for his beloved country, but in my estimation the love between two brothers, who cling to one another with a sincere and perfect affection, is fully as great as any of those which I have named above. From love of this sort (although sometimes it hap-

pens quite otherwise) there may spring up the most blessed and happy results, which bring sweet fulfilment to the projects of men beyond their most sanguine hopes. Of this truth I could bring forward, if I would, numberless examples, these however I will pass over in silence, so as not to cause weariness to this noble and gracious company. But in order that I may duly fulfil the promise I have made to you, I will now lay before you, as an example, the case of two brothers who lived in our own time, and this story of mine may prove to be, I hope, a source both of pleasure and profit to you all.

In Naples, a city which is justly celebrated and famous, one abounding in lovely women of virtuous carriage, and rich in all good things that the mind can think of, there resided, not long ago, two brothers, one of whom was called Hermacora, and the other Andolfo. These two men were of noble lineage, being scions of the great family of Carafa, and both were gifted with good

parts and a lively wit. Besides this, they were concerned in large traffic of merchandise, whereby they had acquired for themselves great wealth. Now these two brothers, rich men, of noble parentage, and neither one as yet married, shared, as loving brothers should, the common expenses of their living, and so great was the attachment between them that the one would never think of doing aught which would not likewise be pleasant to the other.

In the course of time it happened that Andolfo, the younger brother—acting with the consent of Hermacora—took to wife a beautiful gentlewoman of noble blood named Castoria. This lady, as became a wise and high-minded woman, loved and reverenced Hermacora, her brother-in-law, as righteously as Andolfo her husband, and the one and the other alike reciprocated her affection; so that there reigned in this household concord and peace the like of which is seldom to be found. It

pleased Heaven to give Castoria numerous children, and as the family grew in number, so in like manner grew their affection and welfare. Their riches also increased greater day by day, and, seeing that they were all of one mind and of one heart, no discord ever arose between them. When, however, the children were grown up and had arrived at full age, blind fortune, who is ever jealous of the happiness of others, indignantly interposed, seeking to sow discord and strife where before there had been such perfect union and peace.

For Andolfo, moved thereto by a childish and ill-regulated desire, was seized by the wish to part company with his brother, and to realize his share of their common fortune and to live by himself elsewhere. Wherefore he one day addressed his brother in these words: 'Hermacora, we have now lived for a long time very happily together, sharing all our belongings, and a wrathful word has never been spoken between us.

Now, in order that fickle fortune may not come, like the wind amidst the leaves, and sow discord between us, bringing in disorder and disunion where hitherto concord and peace have reigned, I have determined to realize my part of our wealth and to go my own way. I do not propose to separate myself from you because you have ever done me nught of injury, but in order that I may be able to spend my own money according to my own liking.' Hermacora, when he understood what the foolish desire of his brother really was, could not help feeling deeply grieved thereanent, especially as he could not divine what the cause might be which was now urging his brother to separate himself so lightly from him. Wherefore with speech as gentle and loving as he knew how to use he began to advise and to beg Andolfo that he would forthwith banish this evil counsel from his mind. But in spite of everything he said Andolfo waxed more obstinate than ever

and persisted in his malevolent desire, giving no thought whatever to the loss and injury which must be the issue thereof. At last he cried out vehemently: 'Hermacora, you ought to know well enough the saying that it is of no profit to argue with a man who has made up his mind; therefore it is unnecessary that you should come to me with your wheedling speech to try and turn me back from following a course upon which I am firmly set. Furthermore, I have no mind that you should press me to give you any reason of mine as to why I choose to separate myself from you. I will only say that the sooner the division is made and we go our several ways, the better I shall be pleased.' Hermacora, seeing how strongly his brother was bent on carrying out his scheme, and that he could in no way move him with gentle speech, spake thus to him: 'Brother, since it pleases you that we should now divide our goods and part one from another,

I (not however without deep pain and somewhat of displeasure to boot) am prepared to satisfy your wish and to do what you propose. But there is one favour I have to ask of you, and I beg you will not refuse to grant it to me; for should you refuse it you would soon see me a dead man.'

To this Andolfo replied: 'Say what you wish, Hermacora, for in every other matter, except the one which we have just been discussing, I shall be willing to content you.' Then answered Hermacora: 'It is no doubt within the bounds of right and reason that we should divide our possessions and separate the one from the other. Now, seeing that this division has to be made by someone, I would that you should be that man, settling the two parts in such a fashion that neither one of us shall have any cause to complain thereof.' To this Andolfo replied: 'Hermacora, it is scarcely seemly that I, being the younger brother, should be called upon

to make this division. Surely such duty belongs rather to you who are the elder.'

In the end Andolfo, who was burning with eagerness for the division to be made in order to fulfil his darling wish, and unable to hit upon any other means of bringing the matter to an end, undertook the task of dividing the goods, and gave to his elder brother the choice of taking which share he would. Hermacora, who was a prudent, clever, and kindly-natured man, now pretended that the two parts had not been equally divided, although, in sooth, he must have seen that they had been apportioned with the strictest justice; wherefore he said: 'Andolfo, the division which you have here made seems, no doubt, to you a just one, and for that reason you assume that neither one of us ought to complain; but to me it does not seem just. Therefore I beg you to make another trial to divide it more fairly, so that neither you nor I should have any cause for discontent.' When Andolfo saw that

his brother was ill-satisfied with the division he had made, he took away certain things from one of the shares and added them to the other, asking Hermacora whether the parts were by this change made equal, and whether he was now contented. Hermacora, who was in his heart all that was kindly and loving, nevertheless continued to cavil at his brother's work, and feigned to be still discontented therewith, although the division had been most righteously and justly made.

Meantime it seemed to Andolfo very strange that his brother refused to be contented with what he had done, and, with an angry look upon his face, he took the paper upon which the division had been reckoned and noted down, and tore it to pieces in his wrath. Then, turning towards his brother, he said: 'Go and divide our goods according to your own will, for I am bent at any cost on bringing this business to an end, even though it be finished to my own disad-

vantage.' Hermacora, who could not help seeing that his brother was sorely inflamed with anger, made answer to him in a kindly and gentle manner: 'Andolfo, my brother, put aside that scornful bearing, and let not your indignation get the better of your reason; restrain your anger, temper your wrath, and learn to know yourself. Then, like a wise and prudent man, consider well whether the parts into which our substance has been divided are equal, and if you find that they are not equal, divide them once more, for then I will of a surety be content, and take the share allotted to me without cavilling.'

Andolfo did not as yet comprehend the drift of the thoughts which were working in the kindly heart of his brother, nor did he perceive the artful net which Hermacora was designing to cast over him. So, growing yet more angry, he cried out to his brother with even greater rage than before: 'Hermacora, did I not tell you at the beginning

of this business that you were the elder brother, and that it pertained to you to make this division of our wealth? Why did you not make it yourself? Did you not promise to be satisfied with any apportionment of the same which I might make? And now you fail to keep faith with me.' To this Hermacora answered: 'My dearest brother, if, after you have divided our goods and given me my share thereof, I find that this is not equal to yours, what wrong do I work you by complaining?' Then said Andolfo: 'What thing is there in all the house of which you have not been allotted your due share?' But Hermacora went on insisting that he had not been fairly treated, and they fell a-wrangling, the one saying 'Yes,' and the other 'No.' At last Andolfo said: 'I would much like to know in what respect I have failed to make the parts equal.' And Hermacora replied to him: 'My brother, you have failed in the most important part.' But after he had thus spoken

Hermacora, seeing that Andolfo was waxing more and more angry, and that the matter, if it should be further drawn out, might bring scandal and hurt to the honour of their house, and peradventure place even their lives in jeopardy, heaved a deep sigh and went on: 'You declare, oh! my beloved brother, that you have indeed given me the full share which by right belongs to me, but this I deny and I will moreover prove the same to you by the clearest evidence, so that you may even see it with your eyes and touch it with your hands. Now, put your anger aside, and tell me whether, from the day when you led home to our house Castoria, your beloved wife and my dear sister-in-law, we have not all lived together in fraternal affection?' 'Assuredly we have,' answered Andolfo. 'Then,' asked Hermacora, 'has Castoria not striven to do her best in governing the house for the benefit of us all?' 'Certainly,' said Andolfo. 'Is she not the mother of all these children whom

we have now around us?' asked Hermacora; 'and have they not, mother and children, lived at our common cost?' While Hermacora was thus speaking in this tender loving strain, Andolfo grew more and more astonished, and he failed to see to what end his brother could be thus addressing him. Hermacora went on: 'My brother, you have indeed divided our goods, but you have not divided your wife and children, giving me my share of them. Shall I no longer have any part in their love and care? How am I to live without the society of my dear sister-in-law and of my beloved nephews and nieces? Give me, therefore, my share in the love of these, and then go in peace, for I shall be well content. If you cannot do this, I will not consent to the division being made. And in case (which God forbid) you will not agree to this proposition of mine, I swear that I will summon you before a human tribunal on earth, and there claim justice of you. If I cannot obtain it in

this world, I will cite you before the tribunal of Christ, to whom all things are clear and manifest.'

Andolfo listened very attentively to the words spoken by his brother, and was mightily amazed at what he heard. Then for the first time he began to realize how great must be the tenderness of heart which stirred so strongly the deep well of love in Hermacora's bosom, and he was so overcome with shame and confusion that he hardly ventured to utter a word in answer to what Hermacora had said. At last he felt the justice of his brother's words, and his heart, heretofore so hard, was softened, and prostrating himself on the ground before his brother, he said: 'Hermacora, of a truth my ignorance has been great, and great also my fault. Greatest of all, however, are your devotion and loving-kindness. Now I see clearly my wretched error and my ignorant blindness. Now my eyes can pierce through the baffling mist which has hitherto blunted and obscured

my gross perception. Of a truth I deserve the swiftest and the sharpest chastisement that the public tongue can pronounce against me, and I confess myself worthy of the severest punishment that can be devised. But, because your heart has ever been full of clemency and love towards me, I will venture now to draw near to you, as to a fount of living water, begging you to pardon my heinous fault, and promising never to forsake you, but to remain ever in affectionate union with you, together with my wife, and to allow you to dispose of my children as if they had been born to you.' Then the brothers embraced one another, while tears of love and reconciliation fell from the eyes of both of them, and in this manner they found perfect reunion one with the other, and from this time forth there never arose another word of discord between them. For many years they all lived together in perfect peace, and after their death the children, and their children, were left the sharers

of the great wealth they had accumulated.

This pathetic story of what had passed between the two brothers pleased greatly the whole company, and it here and there proved to be so pity-moving, that not only the ladies, but even the men shed tears when it was shown to them how great was the love which Hermacora bore to Andolfo his brother, and with what gentleness he had appeased Andolfo's obstinate humour, and in the end beaten back the attacks of evil fortune. When the Signora saw that the men, and the women also, were wiping away from their eyes the tears that flowed therefrom, she made a sign that everyone should straightway cease from weeping, and commanded Lionora to finish her story with an enigma, and the damsels at once spake as follows :

When we look on all around,
Many beauteous things are found.
Once I was a virgin fair;
Now a mother's part I share,

Giving life so full and free
To him who once gave life to me.
And my mother's mate I feed,
Mother to my sire in need.
Tell me who is she who gives
Life to him through whom she lives ?

When Lionora had brought her enigma to an end, it won no little praise from all the company, and a certain one stood up and made an attempt to give an interpretation thereof, but his essay was a vain one, for he came not near the right solution. Wherefore Lionora, smiling gently, explained it in the following words: "Once upon a time there was an innocent old man who was unjustly thrown into prison and condemned to death by starvation, and was in consequence kept without food. But his jailers suffered his daughter to visit him, and she nourished him with the milk from her own breast; thus from being a daughter she became a mother, giving life to him who had given life to her."

The enigma told by Lionora proved

fully as interesting to the company as her piteous story. In order that the last of the damsels might complete the story-telling of the night, she sat down after she had made due salutation to the Signora, and Isabella, who had been chosen to fill the last place, rose from her seat and thus blithely began her fable.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Three brothers, poor men, go out into the world and acquire great riches.



HAVE often heard it said that wit is ever the master of force, and that there is no undertaking in the whole world, however difficult and arduous it may appear, which man may not carry out by means of his ingenuity. This truth I will prove to you in a very brief fable, if you will lend me your attention.

There once lived in this excellent city of ours a poor man to whom were born three sons, but by reason of his great

poverty he could find no means of feeding and rearing them. On this account the three youths, pressed by need and seeing clearly the cruel poverty of their father and his decaying strength, took counsel amongst themselves and resolved to lighten the burden which lay upon their father's shoulders by going out into the world and wandering from place to place with a staff and a wallet, seeking in this wise to win certain trifles by the aid of which they might be able to keep themselves alive. Wherefore, having knelt humbly before their father, they begged him to give them leave to go forth into the world in search of their sustenance, promising at the same time that they would come back to the city when ten years should have gone by. The father gave them the desired licence, and with this purpose in their minds they set forth and travelled until they came to a certain place, where it seemed to them all they would do well to part one from another.

Now the eldest of the brothers by chance found his way into a camp of soldiers, who were on the march to the wars, and straightway agreed to take service with the chief of a band. In a very short space of time he became highly expert in the art of war and a powerful man-at-arms and a doughty fighter, so much so that he took a leading place amongst his fellows. So nimble and so dexterous was he, that with a dagger in each hand he would scale the wall of every lofty fortress they assaulted.

The second brother arrived at last at a certain seaport, where many ships were built, and, having betaken himself to one of the master shipwrights, a man who was greatly skilled in handicraft, he worked so well and with such diligence that in a little time there was no other of the workmen equal to him in his calling, and the good report of him was spread through all the country.

The youngest brother, as it chanced, came one day to a certain spot where a

nightingale was singing most sweetly, and so mightily was he charmed and fascinated thereby that he ever went on his way following the traces and the song of the bird through shadowy valleys and thick woods, through lakes, through solitary places, through echoing forests, and through regions desert and unpeopled. So strongly did the sweetness of the bird's song take hold on him that, forgetful of the way which led back to the world of men, he continued to dwell in these wild woods; wherefore, having lived ten whole years in this solitary state apart from a dwelling of any kind, he became as it were a wild man of the woods. By the long lapse of time, and by unvarying and constant usance of the place in which he tarried, he became skilled in the tongue of all the birds to whom he listened with the keenest pleasure, understanding all they had to tell him, and being known by them as if he had been the god Pan among the fauns.

When the day appointed for the brethren to return to their home had come, the first and the second betook themselves to the place of meeting, and there awaited the third brother. When they saw him approaching, all covered with hair and naked of raiment, they ran to meet him, and, out of the tender love they had for him, broke out into pitiful tears, and embraced and kissed him, and went about to put clothes upon him. Next they betook themselves to an inn to get some food, and, while they sat there, behold ! a bird flew up on to a tree and spake thus as it sang : ' Be it known to you, O men who sit and eat, that by the corner-stone of this inn is hidden a mighty treasure, which through many long years has been there reserved for you. Go and take it ! ' and having thus spoken, the bird flew away.

Then the brother who had last come to the place of meeting set forth plainly to the other two what was the meaning of the words which the bird had spoken,

and straightway they digged in the place which had been described, and took out the treasure which they found therein. In this manner they all of them became men of great wealth, and went back to their father.

After they had tenderly greeted and embraced their father and given rich and sumptuous feastings, it chanced that one day the youngest brother heard the song of another bird, which spake as follows : ' In the Ægean sea, within the range of about ten miles, is an island, known by the name of Chios, upon which the daughter of Apollo has built a massy castle of marble. At the entrance of this there lies a serpent, as the guardian thereof, spitting out fire and venom from its mouth, and upon the threshold is chained a basilisk. There Aglea, one of the fairest ladies in all the world, is kept a prisoner with all the treasure which she has heaped up and collected, together with a vast store of coin. Whoever shall go to this place and scale the

tower shall be the master of the treasure and of Aglea as well.' And when the bird had thus spoken it flew away. As soon as the meaning of its words had been made known, the three brothers determined to go to the place it had described—the first brother having promised to scale the tower by the aid of two daggers, and the second to build a swift-sailing ship. This having been accomplished in a very short space of time, they set forth, and, after crossing the sea with good fortune, wafted along by a favourable breeze, they found themselves close to the isle of Chios one morning just before the break of day. Then the man-at-arms by the aid of his two daggers climbed the tower, and, having seized Aglea and bound her with a cord, handed her over to his brothers. Next, after he had taken from their hiding-places all the rubies and precious stones, and a heap of gold which was also there, he descended, rejoicing greatly, and the three adventurers, leaving naked

the land which they had plundered, returned to their homes safe and sound. But with regard to the lady, seeing it was not possible to divide her into three parts, there arose a sharp dispute between the brothers as to which one of them should retain her, and the wrangling over this point, to decide who had the strongest claim to her, was very long. Indeed, up to this present day it is still before the court; wherefore we will each settle the cause as we think right, while the judge keeps us waiting for his decision.

When Isabella had brought her short story to an end, she put her hand into her pocket and drew therefrom the scroll on which her enigma was written and gave it thus :

A proud black steed, with wings of white,
The earth ne'er touches in its flight;
Behind it bears the rein which guides,
And wearies oft the wight who rides.
Great store of wealth within it brings.
Now flaps its plumes and now its wings;

Now midst the strife of battle lies;
Now peaceful fares; has two great eyes,
But nought can see; runs to and fro,
And bears man where he would not go.

This enigma set forth by Isabella with such great wit was in a certain sense understood by all the company, for it could be held to describe no other thing except a proud and stately ship, which is coloured black with pitch and has white sails; it ploughs the sea, and flees the shore so as not to be shattered on the rocks. It has its rudder behind, which directs its course, and rows of oars on either side in the similitude of wings. In time of peace it is taken up with traffic, and in time of war it goes to battle. In front it has two great eyes, and sometimes by hazard carries men into strange regions where they have no desire to go.

And now because the hour was late the Signora bade them to light the torches, and gave leave to all the ladies and gentlemen to return to their homes,

at the same time charging them strictly that on the following evening they should all return to the accustomed spot ready to continue the entertainment, and to this command they with one voice promised obedience.

The End of the Seventh Night.

Night the Eighth.





Night the Eighth.

THE fair-haired and luminous Apollo, the son of Jove the thunderer and of Latona, had now departed from our world, and the fireflies, having come forth from their dark and shadowy hiding-places, were flitting joyously through the dusk of night, which in every corner was overcome by the sparkling light they shed around, when the Signora, having repaired with the damsels to the noble hall, gave gracious welcome to the honourable company, who had come a few minutes before to the place of meeting. And when she remarked that all those who had come to last night's gathering were now present, she gave order for the instruments to be brought in, and after they had danced somewhat, a servant

fetched the golden vase. Out of this a child drew five names, the first being that of Eritrea, the second that of Cateruzza, the third that of Arianna, the fourth that of Alteria, the last place being reserved for Lauretta. But before the sprightly Eritrea was suffered to make beginning of her fable the Signora let them know it was her will that they should all five together sing a canzonet, to the music of the instruments. Whereupon the damsels, with joyful faces, and looking as fair as angels, began in this fashion their singing :

SONG.

Ah, cruel ruthless fair !
How often from your eyes is sped the ray
That gives me life, that takes my life away.
My flowing tears will gain for me, I ween,
If not thy mercy, yet at least thy ruth ;
Nor care nor credence hast thou for my truth.
And in your face serene
I read a doom more dire to me is given ;
An outcast I from Love and Death and Heaven.

The song, with its cadence so divinely soft, gave great pleasure to all who listened, but especially it commended itself to Bembo, wherefore, in order not to divulge the secret thought he cherished within his breast, he did not join in the laughter. And having turned towards the gracious Eritrea, he said : " It is now high time that you should begin the story-telling with some delightful fable of your own ; " and the damsel, without waiting for any further command from the Signora with a smiling face thus began.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Three rogues journey together to Rome, and on the way thither pick up a ring, over which they come to high words as to who shall get it. Meeting a certain gentleman, they ask his arbitrament and he decides it shall go to the idlest loon of the three, but no settlement of the cause is made.



HAVE carefully considered, most excellent ladies, the exceeding great variety of conditions under which unfortunate mortals at present live, and of these I find none more wretched and unhappy than the condition of a lazy rogue, because men of this sort, on account of their mean estate, are ill spoken of by all and pointed at by every finger. Again, more often than not, they prefer to go on living in their rags and poverty than to give up their disgraceful calling. This contention I will prove, in the course of my story, concerning the adventures of

three lazy rascals, after a fashion easily to be understood.

You must know, then, that (about two years agone from this present time) there lived in the territory of Siena three fellows, young in years, but as old and finished in all the arts of roguery and laziness as anyone could tell of or imagine. Of these one was called Gordino, seeing that he was more addicted to gluttony than the other two ; the second, because he was a poor weakling and of no good for aught, was called Fentuzzo by all who knew him ; and the third, because his brainpan was very scantily furnished, went by the name of Sennuccio. Now one day it chanced that these three, finding themselves upon the high road, began to talk together, and Fentuzzo said : ‘ Whither are you bound, brothers ? ’ To him Gordino replied : ‘ I am on the way to Rome.’ ‘ And what are you bent on doing there ? ’ Fentuzzo inquired. ‘ I am bent on finding out,’ replied Gordino, ‘ some good adventure which will serve

me well enough so as to allow me to live for the future without troubling myself about anything.' 'Ah, then, we will fare with you!' cried the two rogues. Then said Sennuccio: 'If it should fall in with your pleasure I will willingly join you in the enterprise.' Whereupon the two others gladly accepted his fellowship, and made a vow one with another that they would on no account part company until such time as they should be come within the city of Rome. And as they went along the road, talking together of this thing and of that, it chanced that Gordino cast his eyes down upon the ground and there espied a fine gem set in a gold ring, which shone so brilliantly that it wellnigh dazzled his sight. But, before this, Fentuzzo had pointed out the jewel to his two companions, and the matter came to an issue by Sennuccio picking it up and putting it upon his finger. As soon as he had done this there sprang up between the three a very violent dispute as to which

of them had the best claim to the jewel.

Gordino maintained stoutly that it ought to belong to him, because he had first espied it. Said Fentuzzo, 'It surely ought rather to be mine, because I pointed it out to you.' 'It ought to belong to me rather than to either of you,' said Sennuccio, 'because I picked it up from the ground and put it on my finger.' And thus the knavish rascals kept up their wrangling, neither one being willing to give up his claim in favour of the others, till at last they went on from words to blows, and spent divers shrewd bouts of fisticuffs over each other's heads and faces till the blood ran down on all sides like rain. It happened that just at this hour a certain Messer Gavardo Colonna, a Roman noble and a man of high office, was on the road back to the city from visiting a farm he owned, and, having caught sight of the three ruffians from afar, and heard the sound of the uproar they were making, stopped short,

and was sore stricken with confusion, and assailed with a pressing fear that they would most likely fall upon him and take his life. More than once he felt moved to curb his horse and turn back in the way he had come, but at last he plucked up his courage and took heart, and continued his journey till he came up to the three companions, whom he addressed in these words: 'Ho, fellow-travellers! what is the meaning of this hurly-burly between you?' And to this Gordino made answer, 'Save your honour, good sir, the matter over which we are wrangling is this: we three have set forth from our respective homes, and, as luck would have it, we met one another on the road, and thereupon agreed to travel in one another's company to Rome. Wherefore, as we were journeying on and conversing together I espied upon the ground a very fair jewel set in gold, which by every claim of reason ought assuredly to belong to me, because I was the first to see it.' 'And I,' said

Fentuzzo, 'declare that I first pointed it out to these two others, and on this account it appears that it ought to belong to me rather than to them.' But Sennuccio, who was not asleep, meantime said, 'I hold, signor, that the jewel ought to be awarded to me and not to the others, because without any sign being made to me thereanent, I picked it up from the ground and placed it on my finger. So neither one of us being disposed to give way to the others we began to fight, and thereby put ourselves in grave danger of death.'

Now when the Signor Gavardo had rightly apprehended the reason of the dissension between the three, he said: 'Tell me, my good fellows, whether you are disposed to refer the composition of this your dispute to me, so that I may find a way to bring you once more into accord?' And to this they all three of them replied that they were willing it should be so, and pledged their faith that they would abide by any award which

might be given by the gentleman in the business. Signor Gavardo, when he saw they were disposed to act fairly, said: 'Since you by common consent have placed yourselves in my hands, desiring that I should be the sole adjudicator of your dispute, I, on my part, only require two things to be done by you. One of them is, that the jewel shall be given into my hands; and the other is, that each one of you shall set about devising how he may give the greatest proof of laziness. Then, at the end of fifteen days, the one who shall show himself to be the meanest, laziest rascal, shall become the undisputed master of the jewel.'

The three companions agreed straightway to these terms, and, having given over the jewel into the gentleman's keeping, set out on their journey to Rome. When they arrived in the city they went their several ways, one going here and the other there, each one of them having made up his mind to endeavour to bring to pass, to the best of his pow-

ers, some achievement of laziness which should outdo any deed of the same sort hitherto accomplished, and be worthy to be kept in perpetual remembrance. Gordino at once found a master whom he agreed to serve on certain terms ; and it chanced that this man bought one day in the piazza a lot of early figs of the kind which ripen at the end of the month of June, and gave the same to Gordino to hold till such time as he should return to his house. Gordino, who was enormously lazy and by nature no less of a glutton, took one of the figs, and—following the while in his master's steps—ate it secretly bit by bit. And because the taste of the fig tickled his palate very pleasantly, the lazy glutton went on, and covertly ate certain others of the figs. As the greedy rascal continued to gorge himself, it happened that at last he put in his mouth a fig which was of an extraordinary bulk ; wherefore, being greatly afeared lest his master should spy out his theft, he thrust the fig into a

corner of his mouth, as if he had been an ape, and kept it there. Of a sudden the master turned to look behind him, and casting his eye upon Gordino, he fancied that the fellow's left cheek was swollen somewhat. After looking him steadily in the face he was fully assured that the cheek was much swollen, and when he inquired of Gordino what had happened to him to cause such a swelling, the rascal stood as one dumb and answered not a word. When the master saw this he was mightily astonished, and said, 'Gordino, open your mouth so that I may examine what is the matter with you, then perhaps I may be able to devise a remedy.' But the wretched fellow would neither open his mouth nor utter a word; indeed, the more his master tried to make him open his mouth the tighter and closer shut the rascal kept his teeth. So at last, after the master had made divers trials to get Gordino's jaws apart, and finding none of them to be of any service, he took him to a bar-

ber who lived thereabout, fearing lest some sore mischance might happen to him, and showed him to the blood-letter, saying, 'Messer, a very foul accident has just happened to this my servant, and as you can see his cheek is swollen so much that he can no longer speak, nor can he open his mouth. I fear greatly that he may choke.' Whereupon the surgeon deftly touched the swollen cheek and said to Gordino, 'What do you feel, good brother?' but he got no response. 'Open your mouth,' he went on, and the fellow did not move in the least. The surgeon, finding it hard to hit upon a method of working a cure with words, took up certain of his instruments, and began to make trial therewith to see whether he might be able to get the mouth open, but he could not by any manner of means induce the lazy rascal to move his jaws.

The surgeon now fancied that the evil must arise from an imposthume, which had gathered little by little and which

was now mature and fit for treatment, so he gave the place a cut in order that the gathering might the easier disperse. This lazy rascal, Gordino, who had in sooth heard all that was said, did not move a muscle or utter a sound, but stood as still as if he had been a firm-built tower. Having done this the surgeon began to press the tumour, so as to be able to see what the discharge, which was coming therefrom, might be like; but in place of pus and putrefaction he found nothing but healthy blood mixed with the fig-flesh which Gordino still kept closely shut in his mouth. His master, seeing that all this turmoil had arisen over a fig, and seeing, moreover, what a lazy ruffian his servant was, bade the surgeon dress the wound, and then, when he was cured, told Gordino to be gone, and bad luck go with him.

Fentuzzo, who was no whit less given to slothfulness than Gordino, soon got rid of the few coins which he happened

to have in his pocket, and failing, through his want of wit, to find anyone upon whom he could play the sponge, went about begging from door to door, sleeping now in this portico, now in that, and by times even out in the forest. It happened that on a certain night the vagabond ruffian came upon an old building fallen to ruin, and, having gone into it, found a heap of dung and a little straw, upon which he lay down and disposed himself in the best fashion he could, with his body on the heap and his legs stretched out beyond. Weariness came upon him, and he fell asleep; but, before he had lain long, there arose a violent wind accompanied by so great a downpour of rain and tempest that it seemed as if the world were coming to an end, nor was there any ceasing of rain and lightning all through the night. And seeing that the covering of the roof was old and rotten, a drop of rain-water which came in through a hole fell down into the eye of Fentuzzo, thereby

awakening him and letting him rest quiet no longer. The wretched loon, on account of the arrant laziness which possessed him, showed no disposition to withdraw himself from the place where he lay, or to elude the danger which was threatening him, but continued to lie on in the same spot, persisting in his dogged obstinate mood, and still keeping his eye in the place where the drops were falling, as if it had been a hard and insensible pebble. The stream of rain-water, which fell without ceasing from the roof, striking upon his eye in its descent, was so bitterly cold that before morning came the sight of the poor rogue's eye was destroyed. The next day, after he had been a short time astir to see how he might win some food for his belly, he found something was wrong with one of his eyes, and, fancying that he was but half awake, he put his hand over the other and shaded it, whereupon he discovered that the other was destroyed. As soon as he

was certain that he was in this case, he fell into an immoderate fit of joyfulness, holding that no chance more favourable or luckier could have befallen him, and persuading himself that the feat of slothfulness he had just accomplished must of a surety win for him the prize of the jewel.

Sennuccio, who in the meantime had adopted a way of life no less slatternly than that of the other two, took a wife, a woman who was fully his equal in laziness, Bedovina by name. One evening after supper, the pair were seated near the door of the house to take the air a little, for the season was very warm. Said Sennuccio to his wife, 'Bedovina, shut the door, for now it is time for us to get to bed.' To this request she made reply that he might shut the door himself; and as they went on thus disputing, without either one consenting to shut the door, Sennuccio said, 'Bedovina, let us make a bargain, that the one who shall speak first shall shut the door.'

The wife, who was both lazy by nature and obstinate by habit, agreed to this; so Sennuccio and Bedovina sat on, lazy wretches as they were, neither one daring to speak for fear of incurring the penalty of having to shut the door. The good woman, however, soon began to weary of the sport, and growing heavy with sleep she left her husband sitting on a bench, and, having taken off her clothes, went to bed.

A short time after this there passed through the street the serving-man of a certain gentleman, who was going back to his house. At this moment it chanced that the candle in the lantern which he carried went out, and, observing that Sennuccio's house was yet open, he went in and said, 'Ho, there! is anyone within? give me a light for my candle;' but no one answered him. The servant, having gone a little further into the house, observed Sennuccio, who was sitting with his eyes wide open upon the bench, and made bold to ask him for a

light, but the lazy fellow vouchsafed not a word in reply. Whereupon the servant, deeming that Sennuccio was fast asleep, took him by the hand and began to jog him, saying, 'Good brother, what ails you? Answer me quick.' But Sennuccio was not asleep, and only held his tongue through fear of being amerced in the penalty of having to shut the door, so he kept silent. Then the servant went on a little further, and remarked a faint light on a hearth where the embers were yet alive, and when he entered the inner room he found no one there save only Bedovina, who was lying alone in the bed. He called to her and shook her roughly more than once, but she, like her husband, in order not to incur the penalty of having to shut the door, would neither speak nor stir. The servant, having taken a good look at her, found her comely, though miserly of her words, so he laid himself softly down beside her, and though not over well furnished for the task he under-

took, contrived to accomplish it, Bedovina keeping dead silence all the while and quietly allowing him to do what he would with her, though her husband saw all that went on. And when the young man had gone his way Bedovina got out of bed, and, going to the door, found there her husband, who was yet awake, and by way of chiding him thus spake: 'A fine husband you are, certes! You have left me lying all night with the door wide open, giving thereby free course for any lewd fellows to come into the house, and never lifting your hand to keep them back. You of a truth ought to be made to drink out of a shoe with a hole in it.'¹ Whereupon the lazy rascal rose to his feet and gave answer to her in this wise: 'Now go and shut the door, little fool that you are! now I am equal with you. You, forsooth, thought you were going to make me shut the door,

¹ Orig., *Il sarebbe da darvi da bere con una scarpa rotta.*

and you find yourself properly tricked. This is the way headstrong folk are always punished.' Bedovina, seeing that she had indeed lost the wager she had made, and at the same time enjoyed a merry night, shut the door forthwith, and went to bed with her cuckoldly knave of a husband.

When the appointed fifteen days had passed, the three rascals sought the presence of Gavardo, who, when he had been fully informed of the above-written feats of the three companions, and had given consideration to their several arguments, found himself in no wise disposed to make any award thereanent, for it seemed to him that under the vast canopy of heaven there could nowhere be found three other rascals who would equal these in laziness. So, having taken in hand the gem, he threw it down on the ground, and cried out that it should be the property of the one who might pick it up.

At the end of this amusing story there

arose a great dispute amongst the hearers. Some held that the gem belonged by right to Gordino, others would have given it to Fentuzzo, and others to Sennuccio, all of the disputants giving excellent reasons for their particular views. But the Signora, observing that time was flying fast, made known that it was her wish that the question should be reserved for some future time, and bade all be silent in order that Eritrea might follow the due course by propounding her enigma; whereupon the damsel smiling merrily gave it in these words :

By the swampy drear seaside,
Gazing o'er the brackish tide,
Sits a bird of plumage gay
On a rail the livelong day,
Watching for the fish that swim
In the shallows under him.
Should a large one come that way,
Too lazy he to seize his prey,
Neglects it, hoping to discover
One bigger; but when day is over,
The lazy sluggard now must feed
On worms that in the marshes breed.

The above enigma given by Eritrea proved vastly pleasing to all the company, but no one fathomed its meaning save only Bembo, who declared it to be a certain bird, very timid in its habits, which men call Time-loser.¹ It dwelt, he affirmed, only in swampy places, because its favourite food was carrion, and so great was its sloth that it would sit all day long on a stake watching the fish swimming about. If it happened to see one of fair size it would not move, but would let the fish go by and wait for a bigger one, and thus, from morning till evening, it would often go without food. And then, when night had fallen, it would be driven by hunger to descend into the mud and go in quest of marsh-worms upon which to make its meal. Eritrea listened to this clever solution of her enigma and saw clearly that Bembo had guessed it. Though she was somewhat annoyed thereanent, she did not let her discomposure be seen, but resolved to wait

¹ *Perdiornata.*

patiently for time and place to give him a flout in return. Cateruzza, when she saw that the enigma no longer engaged the attention of the company, cared not to wait for any further direction, and having cleared her voice somewhat began her fable in the following words.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Two brothers who are soldiers take to wife two sisters. One makes much of his wife, and is ill-rewarded by her disobedience. The other mishandles his, and she does his will. The former inquires of the latter how he may gain his wife's obedience, and is duly instructed thereanent. Whereupon he threatens his wife with punishment, and she laughs in his face, and ultimately makes scoff at him.

 HE learned and prudent physician, when he foresees that a certain disease will manifest itself in the human body, adopts those remedies which in his estimation promise fairest to preserve life, without waiting for the distemper to

make itself apparent, because a new wound heals more readily than an old one. And a husband when he takes to himself a wife—I must here crave forgiveness of the ladies—should act in precisely the same fashion, that is, never to let her get the upper hand, lest, when some time afterwards he may wish to keep her in order, he may find such task beyond his powers, and be forced to follow in her wake for the rest of his life. Such in sooth was the case of a certain soldier, who, wishing to induce his wife to mend her ways, after he had too long delayed to assert himself, had to put up with the consequences of this failing of his to the day of his death.

No great time ago there lived in Corneto, a village near Rome, situated in the patrimony of St. Peter, two men who were sworn brothers; indeed, the love between them was just as great as it would have been supposing they had been born of the same womb. Of these one was called Pisardo and the other Sil-

verio, and both one and the other followed the calling of arms, and were in the pay of the Pope; wherefore a great love and friendship sprang up between them though they did not dwell in the same house. Silverio, who was the younger in years and was under no family restraint, took to wife a certain Spinella, the daughter of a tailor, a very fair and lovely maiden, but somewhat over-flighty in humour. After the wedding was over and the bride brought home, Silverio found himself so completely inflamed and dominated by the power of her beauty that it seemed to him she must be beyond comparison, and straightway he fulfilled any demand that she might make upon him. Thus it came to pass that Spinella grew soarrantly haughty and masterful that she took little or no reck of her husband. And in time the doting fool fell into such a state that if he should ask his wife to do one thing, she would forthwith do something else, and whenever he told

her to come here, she went there, and laughed at everything he said. Because the foolish fellow saw nothing except through his own foolish eyes, he could not pluck up heart of grace enough to reprove her, nor seek a remedy for his mistake, but let her go her own way, and work her own will in everything, according to her pleasure.

Before another year had passed away Pisardo took to wife Fiorella, the other daughter of the tailor, a damsel no less comely of person than Spinella, nor less sprightly in her disposition. When the wedding-feast was over, and the wife taken home to her husband's house, Pisardo brought forth a pair of men's breeches and two stout sticks, and said: 'Fiorella, you see here this pair of men's breeches. Now you take hold of one of these sticks and I will take hold of the other, and we will have a struggle over the breeches as to who shall wear them. Which one of us shall get the better of the other in this trial shall be

the wearer, and the one who loses shall henceforth yield obedience to the winner.' When Fiorella heard this speech of her husband's, she answered without aught of hesitation in a gentle voice: 'Ah, my husband! what do you mean by such words as these? what is it you say? Are not you the husband, and I the wife, and ought not the wife always to bear herself obediently towards her husband? And, moreover, how could I ever bring myself to do such a foolish trick as this? Wear the breeches yourself, for assuredly they will become you much better than they will become me.' 'I, then,' said Pisardo, 'am to wear the breeches and to be the husband, and you, as my dearly-beloved wife, will always hold yourself obedient to me. But take good care that you keep the same mind and do not hanker after taking the husband's part for yourself, and giving me the wife's, for such licence you will never get from me.' Fiorella, who was a very prudent woman, confirmed all



Parade Young Hostess

Missed the Empire

SECOND VENT

Pisardo And Fiorella

Night the Eighth becomes you
SECOND FABLE

SECOND FABLE





that she had hitherto said, and the husband, on his part, handed over to her the entire governance of his house, and committed all his chattels to her keeping, making known to her the order he desired to have observed in his household.

A little time after this Pisardo said to his wife: 'Fiorella, come with me. I wish to show you my horses, and to point out to you the right way to train them in case you should at any time have to put your hand to such work.' And when they were come into the stable he said, 'Now, Fiorella, what do you think of these horses of mine? are they not handsome? are they not finely tended?' and to this Fiorella replied that they were. 'But now see,' said Pisardo, 'how docile and handy they are.' Then picking up a whip he gave a touch now to this and now to that, saying, 'Go over there; come here.' And then the horses, putting their tails between their legs, went all together into a group

obedient to their master's word. Now Pisardo had amongst his other horses a certain one, very beautiful to look upon, but at the same time vicious and lazy—a beast upon which he set but little store. He went up to this horse, and dealing it a sharp cut with the whip, cried out, 'Come here; go over there;' but the beast, sluggish and sullen by nature, took no heed of the whip, and refused to do anything his master ordered, lashing out vigorously now with one leg, now with the other, and now with both together. Whereupon Pisardo, remarking the brute's stubborn humour, took a tough, stout stick, and began to baste its hide¹ therewith so vigorously that he was soon out of breath with fatigue. However, the horse, now more stubborn than ever, let Pisardo lay on as he would and refused to budge an inch; so Pisardo, seeing how persistent was the obstinacy of the brute, flew into a violent rage, and grasping the sword which he wore by his side he slew it forthwith.

¹ Lit., *pettinare la lana*.

Fiorella, when she saw what her husband had done, was mightily moved with pity for the horse, and cried out, 'Alas, my husband! why have you killed your horse, seeing that he was so shapely to look upon? Surely it is a great pity to have slain him thus.' To this Pisardo replied, with his face strongly moved by passion, 'Know then that all those who eat my bread and refuse to do my will must look to be paid in exactly the same coin.' Fiorella, when she heard this speech, was greatly distressed, and said to herself, 'Alas? what a wretched miserable woman I am! What an evil day it was for me when I met this man! I believed I had chosen a man of good sense for my husband, and lo! I have become the prey of this brutal fellow. Behold how, for little or no fault, he has killed this beautiful horse!' And thus she went on, grieving sorely to herself, for she knew not to what end her husband had spoken in this wise.

On account of what had passed Fio-

rella fell into such a taking of fear and terror of her husband that she would tremble all over at the very sound of his footstep, and whenever he might demand any service of her she would carry out his wishes straightway. Indeed, she would understand his meaning almost before he might open his mouth, and never a cross word passed between them. Silverio, who, on account of the friendship he felt for Pisardo, would often visit the house of the latter, and dine and sup there, remarked the manners and carriage of Fiorella, and, being much astonished thereat, said to himself: 'Great God! why was it not my lot to have Fiorella for my wife, as is the good luck of my brother Pisardo? See how deftly she manages the house, and goes about her business without any uproar! See how obedient she is to her husband, and how she carries out every wish of his! But my wife, miserable wight that I am, does everything to annoy me, and uses me in as vile a fashion as possible.'

One day it chanced that Silverio and Pisardo were in company together, talking of various things, when the former spake thus: 'Pisardo, my brother, you are aware of the love that there is between us. Now, on this account, I would gladly learn what is the method you have followed in the training of your wife, seeing that she is altogether obedient to you, and treats you in such loving wise. Now I, however gently I may ask Spinella to do anything, find that she always stubbornly refuses to answer me, and, beyond this, does the exact opposite to what I ask her to do.' Whereupon Pisardo, smiling, set forth word by word the plan and the means he had adopted when first he brought his wife home, and counselled his friend to go and do likewise, and to see whether he might not also succeed, adding that in case this remedy should not be found efficient, he would not know what other course to recommend.

Silverio was much pleased with this

excellent counsel, and having taken his leave he went his way. When he reached his house he called his wife at once, and brought out a pair of his breeches and two sticks, following exactly the same course as Pisardo had recommended. When Spinella saw what he was doing, she cried out: 'What new freak is this of yours? Silverio, what are you about? What ridiculous fancy has got into your head? Surely you are gone stark mad! Don't you think everybody knows that men, and not women, should wear the breeches?' And what need is there now to set about doing things which are beside all purpose?' But Silverio made no answer and went on with the task he had begun, laying down all sorts of rules for the regulation of his household. Spinella, altogether astonished at this humour of her husband, said in a mocking way: 'Peradventure, Silverio, it seems to you that I know not how to manage a house rightly, since you make all this ado about letting your meaning

be known?' But still the husband kept silence, and having taken his wife with him into the stable, he did with the horses everything which Pisardo had done, and in the end slew one of them. Spinella, when she saw this fool's work, was convinced in her own mind that her husband had in truth lost his wits, and spake thus: 'By your faith, tell me, husband, what crazy humours are these that have risen to your head? What is the true meaning of all this foolishness you are doing without thinking of the issue? Perhaps it is your evil fate to have gone mad.' Then answered Silverio: 'I am not mad, but I have made up my mind that anyone who lives at my charges and will not obey me shall be treated in such fashion as you have seen me use this morning towards my horses.'

Whereupon Spinella, when she perceived the drift of her besotted husband's brutal deed, said: 'Ah, you wretched dolt! it must be clear enough to you that your horse was nothing but a poor

beast to allow himself to be killed in this manner. What is the full meaning of this whim of yours? Perhaps you think you can deal with me as you have dealt with the horse? Certes, if such is your belief, you are hugely mistaken, and you put your hand much too late to the task of setting things in order after the fashion you desire. The bone is become too hard, the sore is now all ulcerated, and there is no cure at hand. You should have been more prompt in compassing the righting of these curious wrongs of yours. You fool! you brainless idiot! do you not see what damage and disgrace must come upon you through these doltish deeds out of number of which you have been guilty? And what profit do you deem you will get from them? None, as I am a living woman.'

Silverio, when he listened to the words of his shrewd wife, knew in his heart that his effort, through the doting affection he had hitherto spent on Spinella, had miserably failed; so he made up his

mind, greatly to his chagrin, to put up patiently with his wretched lot till death should come to release him. And Spinnella, when she perceived how little her husband's plan had turned out to his advantage, resolved that if in the past she had worked her own will with a finger she would henceforth work it with an arm ; for a woman headstrong by nature would sooner die a thousand times than go aside aught from the path which she has deliberately marked out for herself.

All the ladies laughed heartily over the foolish dealing of Silverio, but they laughed yet more when they recalled to mind the battle over the pair of breeches to decide who ought to wear them, and seeing that the laughter was growing louder and longer, and that time was on the wing, the Signora gave the sign for all to cease their talking so that Cateruzza might tell them her enigma according to the order of the revels, and Cateruzza, divining the Signora's wish, spake thus :

Ladies, I sure shall die straightway
If you the name correctly say
Of this the subject I propound.
It must be surely pleasant found ;
For all who taste its quality
Depart commending what they try.
Within my lips its tongue doth bide,
And close I hold it to my side ;
And when I down beside it lie,
All but the blind may us espy.

The enigma propounded by Cateruzza gave to the company even greater pleasure than her story, seeing that it afforded ample subject for reasoning ; some giving an interpretation thereof after one fashion and some after another, but all of these trials were far wide of the true meaning. Whereupon the discreet Cateruzza, with her merry face all covered with smiles, gave with the leave of the Signora the following answer to her riddle : " This enigma of mine simply describes the bagpipe, which lets its tongue, that is, the mouthpiece, be put into the mouth of the one who plays upon it, and holds it tight, and delights all who

listen." Everyone was pleased with the solution of this cleverly-constructed enigma, and they praised it greatly ; but in order that no time might be lost the Signora bade Arianna to follow in her turn, and the damsel, with downcast eyes, first made the due obeisance and then opened her little mouth to tell the following story.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Anastasio Minuto becomes enamoured of a gentlewoman, who rejects his addresses. He reproaches her thereanent, whereupon she tells her husband, who, on account of Anastasio's age, spares his life.



RACIOUS ladies, although ardent wantonness (as Marcus Tullius writes in his book on old age) is at all times foul and disgraceful, nevertheless it is offensive in the highest degree when we encounter it in a hoary-headed old man ; for besides being in itself a wicked and unclean thing, it saps his strength, weakens his

eyesight, robs him of his intellect, makes of him a disgrace and a byword, empties his purse, and, on account of the brief and troublesome term of pleasure it holds out to him as a lure, draws him on to put his hand to all sorts of wickedness. The truth of what I tell you will be made quite clear to you if, according to your wonted custom, you will give a kindly and gracious hearing to the fable I propose to relate to you.

In this our city, which in abundance of fair women outdoes any other in the world, there once lived a certain gentlewoman, very graceful and fully endowed with every beauty, having eyes which, in their loveliness, shone like the morning star. This lady lived in great luxury, and was entertained very delicately by her husband, save in the matter of his marital duties, in the discharge of which he was somewhat slack; wherefore she chose for a lover a lusty and well-mannered youth of honourable family, and made him the object of her favour, lav-

ishing upon him much greater love than she gave to her husband. Now after a time it happened that a certain Anastasio, a friend of her husband's, and now far advanced in years, became so violently enamoured of this gentlewoman that he could find no rest either by day or by night; so consuming, indeed, was the passion and torment he felt on account of this love of his, that in a few days he wasted all away, so that he had left scarcely any flesh to cover his bones. He had eyes bleared and rheumy, his forehead was ploughed with wrinkles, his nose was flat and dribbled constantly like that of a young child, and when he sighed the breath he gave forth had an odour so offensive that it nauseated or even poisoned those who had the ill fortune to be in his neighbourhood, and in his mouth he had but two teeth, which were more of a plague than a profit to him. Besides being afflicted with all these ills he was paralytic, and, although the sun might be in Leo and blazing

hot as a furnace, the poor old wretch would never feel aught of warmth in his limbs.

This wretched old man, being ensnared and inflamed with senile passion, eagerly solicited the favours of the lady, now by the offer of one gift and now of another ; but she, although the gifts which he sent her were rich and of great value, refused them one and all, seeing that she had no need of any offering that he might make her, because her husband was a very rich man and took care to let her want for none of these things. Ofttimes Anastasio would make salutation to her in the street while she was on her way to or from the performance of her religious duties at church, imploring her to accept him as her faithful servant, and no longer to condemn him so cruelly to suffer death by love torment. But she, being a wise and prudent woman, would always cast her eyes down upon the ground, and without answering him a word hasten home.

It happened that Anastasio got intelligence how the young man, of whom we have lately spoken, used to frequent the gentlewoman's house, and he kept so careful a watch upon the goings and comings of the gallant that on a certain evening he saw him enter the house while the husband was absent from the city. When he remarked this he felt as great a pang as if a knife had been driven into his heart, and half beside himself as he was in the frenzy of passion, taking no heed either of his own honour or of that of the lady whom he sought, he took from his store a great quantity of jewels and money, and having gone to the lady's house knocked loudly at the door. The maid of the gentlewoman, when she heard that someone was knocking at the door, went on the balcony and cried out: 'Who knocks?' Whereupon the old man made answer: 'Open the door forthwith, for I am Anastasio, and I have certain weighty business to discuss with madonna.' The

servant, when she knew who it was, ran quickly to her mistress, who at that moment was taking her pleasure with her lover in the next room. Having called her out the maid said to her: 'Madonna, Messer Anastasio is below, knocking at the door.' To this the lady answered: 'Go down quickly and tell him to go about his business at once, for it is not my wont to open my doors to anybody at night when my husband is away from home.' The servant, having heard and understood these words of her mistress, went down as she had been directed and repeated them to Messer Anastasio, but the old man, feeling that he was slighted in being thus repulsed, grew angry and began to knock more fiercely than ever at the door and to insist on being let into the house. The gentlewoman when she heard this was filled with wrath and anger, not only on account of the hurly-burly made by the silly old man, but also because of her lover, who was in the house with her; so she went to the

window and cried out: 'I am in truth mightily amazed, Messer Anastasio, that you should thus come without any consideration to knock and clamour at the doors of other people's houses. Go to bed, you silly old man, and do not annoy those who have no wish to annoy you. If my husband were at home and in the house I would open to you without delay; but seeing that he is abroad, I cannot and will not do this thing.' But the old man went on affirming that he wanted to confer with her on affairs of the greatest moment, and all the time they were talking kept on still knocking at the door.

The lady, perceiving how persistent was the importunity of the dirty old beast, and fearing lest he in his foolishness might speak words injurious to her honour, withdrew a little and took counsel with her young lover as to what she should do. He made answer that she might very well open the door and hear what thing it might be he had to tell

her, and that she need have no fear. Whereupon the gentlewoman (the old man knocking vigorously outside the while) bade them light a torch for her, and then told her maid to open the door. When Anastasio had come into the hall, the lady, looking as fair and fresh as a morning rose, issued from her chamber, and, going towards him, asked him what business he had with her at that hour of the night. The amorous old dotard with wheedling and piteous words, and scarcely keeping back his tears, thus answered: 'Oh, signora, you are the only hope and support of my wretched life! Therefore let it not be a wonder to you that I, rashly and presumptuously forsooth, should come knocking at your door to your surprise and alarm. Of a truth I have not come to annoy you, but to make manifest to you the passion I feel for you, and how sharply I am tormented therefor. And I need not tell you that the cause of my woe is your surpassing beauty,

which renders you the queen of all women, and if the founts of pity in your heart are not entirely sealed up, you will spare a thought for me who on your account die a thousand times a day. Ah, soften a little that hard heart of yours! Think nothing of my age nor of my mean condition, but of my true and devoted mind, and of the ardent love which I bear for you now, and will ever bear as long as my sad soul shall be joined to my stricken and afflicted body. And as a token of this my love for you, I beg that of your kindness you will accept this gift, and, trifling though it be, will hold it dear.' And with these words he drew from his bosom a purse full of golden ducats which shone bright as the sun, and a string of great round white pearls and two jewels set in gold delicately worked. These he presented to the gentlewoman, imploring her in the meantime not to deny him her love; but she, when she heard and clearly understood the words

of the infatuated old man, thus made answer to him: 'Messer Anastasio, I always thought you were a man of better understanding than I now find you to be, forasmuch as you seem to have lost your wits entirely. Where is the good sense and the prudence which you as a man of mature years ought to exhibit? Do you think I am no better than a harlot that you come tempting me by your gifts? Certes, you are hugely mistaken if this is your belief. I have no need of these things you have brought hither, and I bid you carry them rather to some profligate woman who will serve your purpose. I, as you ought to know, have a husband who denies me nothing that I may require. Go your way then, and God speed you, and take care that you order your life aright for the short space of time which yet awaits you on earth.'

The old man when he heard these words was filled with grief and compunction, and said: 'Madonna, I cannot be-

lieve you mean what you say ! Nay, I am sure that you have spoken thus because you are in fear of the young man whom you have now with you in your house.' And here he forthwith mentioned the gallant by name. 'If you will not content me,' he went on, 'and yield to my desires, I will assuredly denounce your conduct to your husband, who is my friend.' The lady, when she heard Anastasio mention the name of the young man who was at this time in her chamber, was not in the least shame-faced and cast down, but on the other hand began to shower the most violent abuse upon the old man that had ever been spoken from one person to another. Then she took in her hand a stout stick, and she would certainly have given him a shrewd basting therewith had he not discreetly slipped down the stairs and fled from the house with all speed.

The lady, as soon as the old man had departed, went back into the chamber where she had left her lover, and, scarcely

keeping back her tears, told him of the mischance that had befallen her. She feared greatly in sooth lest the villainous old man might carry out his threat and unfold everything he had seen to her husband, wherefore she began to take counsel of her gallant as to what course she should adopt. The young man, who was shrewd and well-advised, first comforted the lady and bade her be of good heart; then he set forth to her an excellent scheme which he had devised, saying: 'My soul, do not be alarmed or discouraged, but take the advice which I shall now give you, and rest assured that everything will come to a prosperous issue. As soon as your husband shall have returned to the house, set the whole matter before him concerning the old man's intrusion here just as it happened. And tell him how this wicked and miserable old dotard heaps slander upon you, saying that you have guilty relations with this man and with that. Then you must call over by name five

or six young men whom you know, giving my name as the last on the list. Having done this we will leave the rest to fortune, which will of a certainty be propitious to your cause.'

This counsel given by her lover seemed to the lady wise and judicious, and she forthwith did everything as he had advised her. When the husband came home she at once presented herself with an aspect very sad and woebegone, and with her eyes streaming with tears. Then she began to curse the fate which tormented her so cruelly, and when her husband set himself to question her as to what her affliction was, she answered that she could not tell him. But after a little she cried out in a loud voice, weeping bitterly the while: 'Of a truth I know not what should keep me back from making an end of this wretched life of mine with my own hands! I cannot endure that a perfidious wretch should be the cause of my ruin and lasting shame. Ah, unhappy woman that I am!

What have I done amiss that I should be slandered and cut to the very quick in this wise, and by whom has this ill been wrought? By a very hangman, a murderer, who deserves a thousand deaths!' Having been pressed by her husband to speak further she went on and said: 'That headstrong old dotard, Anastasio, who calls himself your friend, that silly lecherous and wicked old man, did he not come to me a few nights ago asking of me things as dishonest as they were wicked, and offering me money and jewels as the price of my compliance? And because I would not listen to a word of what he had to say or consent to what he wanted, he began to revile me shamefully and to call me a lewd woman, and to declare that I brought men into the house with me, entangling myself now with one, now with another. When I listened to such words as these I nearly died of grief, but after a little, having collected my wits and my courage, I caught up a stick wherewith to

baste him soundly, and he, fearing lest I might carry out my intent, ran away as fast as possible and fled from the house.'

The husband, when he heard this speech of his wife, was vexed beyond measure and set about comforting her, saying that he would play Anastasio a trick which he would remember as long as he lived. Wherefore, when the following day had come, the husband of the lady and Anastasio chanced to meet one another, and before the husband could utter a word Anastasio made a sign that he had something to say to him, and the husband at once signified to him that he was willing to listen to anything he might have to tell. Whereupon Anastasio spake thus: 'Sir, you know how sincere the love and goodwill subsisting between us has always been; it would be impossible indeed to add aught thereto. On this account I, being urged by jealous care for your honour, have determined to say somewhat to you, begging you at

the same time by the love there is between us, that you will keep what I shall tell you a secret, and that you will look into your household affairs as soon as may be with due prudence and foresight. And now, in order not to hold you in suspense by any long preamble, I will tell you that your wife is amorously sought by a certain young man, and that she, on her part, returns his love, and frequently takes her pleasure with him, thereby working great shame and disgrace upon all your family. All this which I tell you I declare to be the truth, for the other night, when you chanced to be away from the city, with my own eyes I saw him enter your house wearing a disguise, and I saw him likewise issue therefrom early the next morning.' The husband, when he heard these words from Anastasio, flew into a violent rage, and began to heap abuse on him, saying: 'Ah, you villainous rascal, you hangman, you wicked wretch! What is there to keep me from seizing

you by your beard, and pulling it out from your chin one hair at a time? Do I not know what manner of woman my wife is, and do I not know likewise how you attempted to corrupt her with money and jewels and pearls? Did you not tell her, you abominable wretch! that if she would not give assent and deliver herself up to your lawless passion you would denounce her to me, deeming that you may thus bring sadness and ruin upon the rest of her life? Did you not say that this man and that man and divers others took their pleasure with her? In sooth, had I not some pity for your old age, I would assuredly tread you under my feet, and not cease kicking you till your wretched soul should have left your body. Now go and be hanged,¹ you miserable old man! and never come into my sight again, for if ever I catch you loitering about my house, I will kill you out of hand.' The old

¹ Orig., *vatene in tua mal' hora.*

man, when he heard these words, pocketed his disappointment¹ and slunk away like one dumbfounded, and the astute and wily gentlewoman in future, under her husband's protection, spent many a merry hour with her lover in greater security than ever.

When Arianna had brought her diverting story to an end every one of the listeners laughed heartily thereat, but the Signora made a sign by clapping her hands together that everyone should be silent. Then she turned towards Arianna and commanded her to complete her story with some merry riddle ; and the damsel, unwilling to let herself appear less witty than the others, began as follows :

A useful thing, firm, hard and white,
Outside in shaggy robe bedight ;
Hollowed within right cleverly,
It goes to work both white and dry.
When after labour it comes back,
You'll find it moist and very black ;
For service it is ready ever,
And fails the hand that guides it never.

¹ Orig., *messe le pive nel sacco.*

The men all laughed at this enigma;¹ not one of them, however, could explain what it meant. Whereupon Alteria, whose turn it was to tell the next story, gracefully explained it to them in the following words : “This enigma signifies nothing else than the pen with which one writes. It is firm, straight, white, and strong. It is pierced at the head and soiled with ink. It is never weary, being swayed to and fro by the writer both in public and in private.” Everybody praised highly the sharp wit displayed by Alteria in explaining this subtly-devised enigma, except Arianna, who was greatly incensed with anger thereat, deeming that she herself alone could give the interpretation. The Signora, when she saw the vexation that burned in her eyes, said to her : “Arianna, be calm, I beg ; for certes another time your own turn will come.” Then, turning herself to-

¹ This same subject has been used by Straparola, under a slightly varied form, for the enigma at the end of the First Fable of the Sixth Night.

wards Alteria, she commanded her to tell her fable forthwith. And the damsels in merry wise thus began it.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Bernardo, a Genoese merchant, sells wine mingled with water, and on this account he is punished by Heaven by the loss of half his money.

THE tale which has just been told to you by my lovesome sister brings back to my recollection a certain accident which befell a Genoese merchant, who having sold wine with which water had been mixed, subsequently lost the money which he had received as the price thereof, and for this reason almost died of grief.

In Genoa, a noble city, and one in which great traffic in merchandise is carried on, there lived once upon a time, a certain Bernardo, of the Fulgosa family, an avaricious wight, and one much given to unlawful dealing. Now this Bernardo

decided to go to Flanders as supercargo of a ship laden with the finest wine of Monte Folisco, hoping to sell the same at a high price. After having set sail one day from the port of Genoa with good luck he passed over the sea without meeting any mischance, and came within a short distance of his destination in Flanders. There, having cast the anchor, he brought his ship to her moorings, and when he had disembarked he added to the wine so great a quantity of water that out of every single cask of wine he made two. Having done this, he weighed anchor and once more set sail, being carried by a fair and prosperous breeze into the port of Flanders.

And because at this season there was a great scarcity of wine in the country, the people of the place bought the aforesaid wine at a very high price. Thus the merchant was able to fill two great sacks with the golden ducats he received, and with these he departed from Flanders rejoicing mightily, and took his way

back to his own country. When Bernardo had sailed a good distance from Flanders and found himself upon the high seas, he brought out all the money he had received, and having placed it on a table began to count it. When he had finished counting it, he put it into two bags, which he tied up by the mouth very securely. Scarcely had Bernardo finished his task, when it chanced that a monkey which was in the ship broke its chain, and having jumped down on to the table, caught up the two bags of money and rapidly scrambled up the mast of the ship. When the ape had mounted up to the maintop rigging it began to take the money out of the bags and pretended to count it. The merchant, who was unwilling to do anything which might irritate the monkey, or to send in pursuit of it, lest through vexation it might throw the ducats into the sea, was in such terrible grief and anxiety that he nearly died thereof. He could not make up his mind what to do, whether he should

go in chase of the monkey or stay where he was. After standing in doubt for some minutes, he decided at last that he would do better to keep quiet and to await whatever might ensue from the whim of the beast. The monkey, having untied the bags and taken out of them all the ducats, handled the coins and played with them for a long time. Then, having put them all back into the bags and tied them up securely, it threw one bag into the sea and the other it threw down to the merchant standing on the deck of the ship, as if to tell the cheating Bernardo that the money which had been thrown into the sea represented the price paid for the water which he had mixed with his wine, and that the bag now lying at his feet was the just price of the wine. Thus the water received what was paid for water, and Bernardo what was paid for wine. Wherefore, recognizing that this adventure had been brought to pass by divine interposition, Bernardo submitted with patience, calling

to mind the saying that ill-acquired goods are never lasting, and that, although he who wins them may enjoy them somewhat, they will surely bring to his heirs loss and ruin.

Alteria's ingenious fable won the high commendations of all the company, and when the Signora gave her the signal that she should tell her enigma she set it forth in the following words :

I am feately made, I trow,
Teeth I have and tongue also ;
Not a bone in me is found ;
Ever to one spot I'm bound.
I can neither talk nor bite ;
Thus I live with scant delight.
I beg you look with care on me ;
A hole right in my midst you'll see.
A wight to torture me comes next,
And through and through I am transfixt ;
Another comes and drags him forth,
And hangs him up as little worth.

This enigma gave rise to long discussion, but no one of all the company was able to find out the meaning there-

of, except Isabella, who said: "This enigma can signify nothing else but a lock, which has teeth and a tongue, but no bones; it cannot eat, and that which fastens it is the key, which likewise often unfastens the box as well. He who draws the key out of the lock hangs it up on some nail." When Isabella had finished her explanation of this obscure riddle, Lauretta, without waiting for further word from the Signora, began her fable.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Maestro Lattantio, a tailor, undertakes to train his apprentice Dionigi in his craft; the latter, however, learns little of this, but acquires great skill in a certain art which the tailor secretly practised. Wherefore great enmity sprang up between them, Dionigi in the end devouring his master and espousing Violante, the daughter of the king.



HE judgments of men are indeed varied, and of many kinds, and varied likewise are their desires and wishes;

while every single man (as the sage says) is full of his own conceit. On this account it is that, of the race of men, certain ones there are who give themselves up to the study of the law, others cultivate the art of oratory, and others indulge in the speculations of philosophy ; one being inclined to this thing, and another to that — nature, who after all is the mistress of our actions, guiding the course of each one ; for she, like a kindly mother, impels each one to that pursuit which is most delightful to him. This thing will be made quite clear to you, provided you will lend a gracious hearing to what I am about to say.

In Sicily, an island which in antiquity surpasses all others we know of, there is situated a noble city called in the vulgar tongue Messina, renowned everywhere for the secure and deep anchorage of its port. In this city was born one Maestro Lattantio, a man who put his hand to two crafts, and was highly

skilled in the exercise both of the one and of the other. One of these, however, he practised openly in the eyes of the world, namely, his trade of a tailor; while the other, the art of necromancy, he kept a secret from all. It came to pass that Lattantio took for his apprentice the son of a poor man in order to make a tailor of him. This youth was called by name Dionigi, an industrious and prudent lad, who learnt with ease whatever his master attempted to teach him.

One day it chanced that Maestro Lattantio, having locked himself up alone in his chamber, was making trial of certain experiments in necromancy, and Dionigi, who had got some inkling of what his master was about, crept noiselessly up to the chamber door, and through a crack therein saw plainly what thing it was that Lattantio his master was doing inside. As soon as Dionigi understood the purport of the thing he had seen he was ardently possessed with

a desire to practise this art himself, and thought of nothing else but necromancy all day long, entirely casting aside all interest in his tailor's craft, not daring, however, to tell aught of what he had discovered to his master. Lattantio, when he perceived the change that had come over Dionigi; how, instead of the skilled and industrious fellow he formerly was, he had become ignorant and a know-nothing, and how he no longer gave any heed to his tailoring work as hitherto, dismissed him straightway and sent him home to his father.

The father of Dionigi, who was a very poor man, lamented sorely when his son came home again, and, after he had reproved the boy, and given him punishment, sent him back to Lattantio, begging the good tailor urgently that he would still retain him in his employ, that he would keep him under sharp discipline and give him his board. The father asked for nothing more in return than that Lattantio should teach Dionigi the

tailor's craft. Lattantio, who was well aware how poor the father of his apprentice was, consented to take back the boy, and every day did his best to teach him how to use his needle; but Dionigi seemed to have become altogether a sleepy-head, and could or would learn nothing. On this account a day rarely passed when Lattantio did not kick him or beat him by way of chastisement, and often broke his poll so that the blood ran down over his face. In sooth, his back was better served with bastings than his belly with provender. But Dionigi took with patience all his punishments, and went every night secretly to the chink in the door and watched all that was being done inside the chamber. Now Maestro Lattantio, when he perceived what a chucklehead the youth was, and how he could learn nothing of the trade he was being taught, troubled himself no longer to keep secret the necromancy he practised, deeming that if Dionigi had a brain too dense to learn

the trade of tailoring, he would assuredly never be able to fathom aught of the deep and intractable secrets of necromancy. On this account Lattantio did not try to keep aloof from his apprentice, but worked his spells freely in his presence. Dionigi, in sooth, was mightily pleased at this turn of things; for, although it seemed to his master that he was dull-witted and a simpleton, he found it no hard task to learn the whole art of necromancy; indeed, he soon became so skilled and expert therein that he was able to work wonders which were even far beyond the powers of Maestro Lattantio.

One day Dionigi's father went to the tailor's shop, and there remarked that his son, instead of working with needle and thread, was engaged in carrying the fuel and water for the service of the kitchen, and sweeping the floors and doing other household work of the meanest kind. When he saw this he was mightily grieved and disturbed in mind,

and, having taken the boy straightway out of Lattantio's service, he led him home. The good man had already spent much money in the purchase of clothes for his son, and in providing for his instruction in the tailor's craft; wherefore now, finding that he could not persuade the lad to learn his trade, he grieved amain, and spake thus to him: 'My son, you know well enough how much money I have laid out to make a man of you, while on your part you have never given me the least help by the trade I set you to learn. On this account I find myself now in the greatest want, and I know not whither I shall turn to find you food. I would, my son, that you could light upon some honest calling in which you might get yourself a living.' To this the son made answer: 'My father, before all else I wish to thank you for all the money and trouble you have spent in my behalf, and at the same time I beg you that you will cease to disquiet yourself because I have not learnt the trade

of a tailor as was your intention and desire, forasmuch as I have acquired the mastery of another art which will be of far greater service to us in the satisfying of our wants. Therefore, my dear father, do not disturb yourself or be sorrowful, because I will soon let you see what great profit I am able to make, and how, with the fruits of my art, you will be able to support your family and keep good cheer in your house. I, by the working of magic art, will transform myself into the most beautiful horse ever seen, whereupon you, having provided yourself with a saddle and bridle, will lead me to the fair and there sell me. On the following day I will resume the form I now bear, and will return home. I must, however, bid you be careful that you give not the bridle to the buyer of the horse, for should you part with it I would not be able to return to you, and peradventure you would never see me again.'

Thereupon Dionigi straightway trans-

formed himself into a beautiful horse, which his father led away to the fair and exhibited to many people who were present. All of these were greatly astonished at the wonderful beauty of the horse, and at the marvellous feats it performed. It happened that at this very same time Lattantio was also at the fair, and when his eyes fell upon the horse he knew there was something supernatural about it; so, having returned to his house, he transformed himself into the guise of a merchant. Then he went back to the fair, taking with him a great quantity of money. When he approached the horse and examined it closely he perceived at once that it was really Dionigi, whereupon he demanded of the owner whether the horse was for sale, and to this question the old man replied that it was. Then, after great chaffering, Lattantio offered to give in exchange for the horse two hundred florins of gold, with which price the owner was fully content, only

stipulating that the horse's bridle should not be included in the sale. Lattantio, however, by persuasive words, and by offers of yet more money, induced the old man to let him have the bridle also, and, having led the horse home to his own house and stalled him there, he tied him up securely and began straightway to beat him severely. This, moreover, he did every morning and every evening, until at last the horse became such a wasted wreck that it was a pitiable thing to look upon it.

Lattantio was the father of two daughters, and these damsels, when they saw the cruel treatment of the horse by their inhuman father, were greatly moved to compassion thereby, and every day they would go to the stable to fondle it and to bestow upon it many tender caresses. And one day it happened that they took the horse by the halter, and led it out of the stable down to the river, so that it might drink. As soon as the horse had come to the river's brink, it rushed

at once into the water, and forthwith changed its form to that of a small fish, and straightway sought the deepest part of the stream. When the daughters saw this strange and unlooked-for thing they were altogether overcome with amazement, and after they had returned to their home they began to shed bitter tears, beating their breasts and tearing their fair locks.

Before very long time had passed Lattantio came back to his house and went at once to the stable, in order that he might beat the horse according to his wont, but he found it was no longer there. Whereupon he flew into a furious fit of anger, and, having gone into the house, he found there his two daughters weeping bitterly, and, without questioning them as to the cause of their tears (for he knew well enough already of their fault), he said to them: ' My daughters, tell me straightway without any fear for yourselves, what has become of the horse, in order that I may make

an attempt to get it back.' The daughters, being somewhat reassured by their father's words, told him exactly all that had befallen them. As soon as Lattantio had heard and understood what had happened, he at once took off all his clothes, and, having gone to the bank of the river, he cast himself therein, transforming himself at the same time into a tunny, and pursued the little fish wherever it went in order to devour it. The little fish, when it knew that the voracious tunny was in pursuit, began to fear lest it might be eaten up; so it swam close to the brink of the stream, and, having changed itself into a very precious ruby ring, leapt out of the water and secretly conveyed itself into a basket carried by one of the handmaids of the king's daughter, who, for her diversion, was gathering certain pebbles along the river's bank, and concealed itself amongst them.

When the damsel had returned to the palace and had taken the pebbles out of

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When the damsel had returned to the palace and had taken the pebbles out

**Dionigi Transformed Before The
Princess Violante**

Night the Eighth

FIFTH FABLE

the basket, Violante, the only daughter of the king, chanced to observe the ruby ring, and, having taken it up, she put it on her finger, and treasured it with the utmost care. And when night had come Violante retired to rest, wearing the ring still upon her finger, when suddenly the ring transformed itself into a handsome young man, who, embracing tenderly the snowy bosom of Violante, felt her two firm round little breasts, and the damsel, who was not yet asleep, was greatly alarmed thereat, and would have screamed aloud. But the young man, having put his hand upon her balmy mouth, would not suffer her to cry out, and, kneeling down before her, he craved her pardon, imploring her to aid him in his trouble, forasmuch as he had not come thither to put any shame upon her or to sully her pure mind, but driven by untoward destiny. Then he told her who he was, and the cause which had brought him into her chamber, and how and by whom he was persecuted. Violante recovered

somewhat of her composure on listening to these words of the young man, and, perceiving by the light of the lamp which was burning in the chamber of what a graceful and seemly presence he was, felt greatly moved to pity thereby, and said to him: 'Young man, of a truth you have been guilty of great arrogance in coming here unsummoned, and greater still has been your presumption in touching that to which you have no right. However, now that I have heard the tale of your misfortunes which you have told to me, and as I am not made of marble, with a heart as hard as a diamond, I am prepared to lend you any aid which I can give honestly, provided that you will promise faithfully to respect my honour.' The young man at once tendered to Violante many words of due gratitude for her kindly speech, and, as the dawn was now growing bright in the sky, he changed himself once more into a ring, which Violante put away amongst her most precious

jewels. But she would often take it out so that it might assume human form and hold sweet discourse with her.

It happened one day that the king, Violante's father, was stricken with a grievous distemper which could be healed by none of the physicians, who all affirmed that his malady was one beyond the aid of medicine, and from day to day the condition of the king grew worse and worse. By chance this news came to the ears of Lattantio, who, having arrayed himself as a physician, went to the royal palace and gained admission to the bed-chamber of the king. Then, having inquired of the king the nature of his malady and carefully observed his countenance and felt his pulse, Lattantio said: 'Gracious king, your malady is indeed grave and dangerous, but be of good heart. You will soon be restored to health, for there is known to me a certain remedy which will cure the deadliest disease in a very short time. Be, therefore, of good cheer, and do not be dis-

mayed.' Whereupon the king said: 'Good master physician, if you will rid me of this infirmity I will reward you in such a fashion that you may live at ease for the rest of your days.' But Lattantio replied that he wanted neither lands nor gold, but only one single favour. Then the king promised to grant him anything which might be within his power, and Lattantio thus made answer: 'Sacred king, I ask for no other reward than a single ruby stone, set in gold, which is at present in the keeping of the princess your daughter.' The king, when he heard this modest demand, said: 'Master physician, if this be all the reward you claim, be assured that it will be readily granted to you.' After this Lattantio applied himself diligently to work a cure upon the king, who in the course of ten days found himself entirely rid of his dangerous malady.

When the king was quite recovered from his ailment and brought back to his former state of health, he one day

bade them summon his daughter into the presence of the physician, and when she appeared he ordered her to fetch thither all the jewels she had. The daughter, obedient to her father's word, did what he commanded her, omitting, however, to bring back with her that one jewel which she held dear above all others. Lattantio, when he had examined the gems, declared that the ruby which he so much desired to have was not amongst them, and that the princess, if she should make diligent search for it, would assuredly find it. The damsel, who was by this time deeply enamoured of the ruby, denied that she had it; whereupon the king, hearing these words of hers, said to Lattantio, ' Go away now and come back to-morrow, for in the interim I will bring such effective persuasion to bear upon my daughter that to-morrow the ruby will assuredly be yours.'

When the physician had taken his departure, the king called Violante to him, and the two having gone together into a

room and closed the door, he asked her in a kindly manner to tell him about the ruby which the physician so ardently desired to have, but Violante firmly denied that she knew aught of it. When she had gone out of her father's presence, Violante went forthwith to her own chamber, and having fastened the door thereof, in her solitude she began to weep, and took the ruby and embraced and kissed it and pressed it to her heart, cursing the hour in which the physician had come across her path. As soon as the ruby saw the hot tears which fell from the lovely eyes of the princess, and heard the deep and woeful sighs which came from her loving heart, it was moved to pity, and straightway took upon itself the form of Dionigi, who with tender words thus addressed her: 'Dear lady, to whom I owe my life, do not weep or sigh on my account, seeing that I am your very slave, but rather let us seek for some remedy in this our calamity. Know, then, that this physician, who desires so

keenly to get possession of me under the form of a ruby, is my bitter foe, who wishes to make an end of me, but you, as a wise and prudent damsel, will not, I am well assured, deliver me into his hands, but when he shall again demand me of you, you must then hurl me violently against the wall, feigning the while to be full of wrathful indignation, and I will provide for what may come after.'

On the following morning the physician went back to the king, and when he listened to the unfavourable answer given by the princess, he became somewhat angered, affirming over and over again that the ruby was indeed somewhere in the damsel's keeping. The king having once more called his daughter into the physician's presence, said to her, 'Violante, you know well enough that by the skill of this physician I have regained my health, and moreover that, as a guerdon for his services, he did not demand of me great gifts of land or of treasure, but simply a certain ruby stone

which he declares you have in your possession. I should have thought that you, on account of the love you bear me, would have given me, not merely a ruby, but even your own blood. Wherefore, because of the love in which I hold you, and because of the suffering and trouble your mother has undergone for your sake, I implore you that you will not deny this favour which the physician demands.' The damsel, as soon as she had heard and comprehended the wishes of her father, withdrew to her chamber, and having taken the ruby, together with many other jewels, she went back into her father's presence and showed the stones one by one to the physician, who immediately his eye fell upon that one which he so greatly desired to have, cried out, 'Behold, here it is!' and made as if he would lay hands on it. But Violante, as soon as she perceived what he would do, said, 'Master physician, stand back somewhat, for you shall have the stone.' Then taking the ruby in her hand and

feigning to be possessed with fierce anger, she said, 'Seeing that this is the precious and lovely jewel which you are searching for, the loss of which I shall regret for the rest of my life, you must know that I do not give it to you of my own free will, but because I am compelled to surrender it in obedience to my father's wishes.' And while she spake these words she threw the beautiful gem with all her strength against the wall, and the ruby, as it fell to the ground, opened forthwith and became a fine large pomegranate, which in bursting open scattered its seeds on all sides. When the physician saw that the pomegranate seeds were spread all over the floor of the room, he immediately transformed himself into a cock, and believing that he might thus make an end of Dionigi, began to pick up the seeds with his beak, but he was frustrated in this cruel design of his, because a certain one of the seeds hid itself in such a fashion that it escaped the notice of the cock. The pomegran-

ate seed thus hidden waited for an opportune moment, and then changed itself into a crafty cunning fox, which swiftly and silently crept up to the crested cock, and, having seized it by the throat, slew it and devoured it in the presence of the king and of the princess. When the king saw what was done he stood as one confounded, and Dionigi, having taken upon himself his original form, told everything to the king from the beginning, and then with full consent was united in lawful marriage to Violante, with whom he lived many years of tranquil and honourable peace. The father of Dionigi was rendered from his poor estate and became rich, and Lattantio, full of envy and hatred, came thus to a miserable end.

Here the diverting fable told by Alteria¹ came to an end, and forthwith all

¹ Sense demands that Lauretta's name should stand here and to the end of the fable in place of Alteria's. Straparola probably made the change in order to give Arianna a chance of retaliating upon Alteria for having solved her enigma in Fable III, Night VIII.

the listeners declared that it had given them great pleasure. Then the Signora made a sign to her that she should complete her duty by giving an enigma, and the damsel with a pleasant smile proposed one in the following terms :

Of lovers mine is sure the best ;
He holds me close upon his breast.
He fondles me ; our lips then meet
With kisses and caressing sweet ;
His tongue my mouth in fondness seeks,
And with such tender accent speaks,
That hearts with love are all afire ;
But brief the space of our desire.
For soon his lips from mine must stray,
To wipe the dews of toil away ;
And from me gently he doth move.
Now say, is this the end of love ?

This enigma furnished matter for no little talk amongst the men, but Arianna, who a short time ago had suffered somewhat from Alteria's bantering, now said : "Signori, do not give yourselves any trouble, nor in your hearts think aught that is unfavourable of this enigma which

my sister has just set us to guess, for in sooth it can mean nothing else except the trombone, which is held close and swayed up and down by the player, and the water which gathers thereabout has to be wiped away in order that he who plays upon it may make music with less difficulty." Alteria, when she heard given the true interpretation of her riddle, was greatly disturbed in mind, and began to show signs of anger, but after a little, when she remembered that she had only been paid back in her own coin,¹ she laid aside her vexation. Then the Signora begged Madonna Veronica to give them a story, and she, without any preamble, began forthwith her fable in the following words.

¹ Orig., *esserle stato reso il cambio.*

THE SIXTH FABLE.

A history of two physicians, of whom the one had great reputation and great riches, but little learning, while the other, though very poor, was indeed a man of parts.

IN these days, gracious ladies, higher honours are bestowed upon mere favourites, upon noble birth, and upon wealth, than upon science, which, although it may be concealed under the external seeming of mean and humble condition, nevertheless shines by its own virtue, and spreads light around like the rays of the sun. And this truth will be made manifest to you if you will, of your courtesy, incline your ears to this brief tale of mine.

There lived once upon a time in the city of Antenorea a certain physician, who was held in high honour and was at the same time a very rich man, but he was little versed in the art of medicine. Now

one day it happened that this man was called to attend a gentleman, one of the chief men of the city, together with another physician residing in the place, who in learning and in the practice of his art was excellently skilled, but none of the rewards of fortune were his. One day, when they went together to pay a visit to the sick man, the first-named physician, richly habited like a great noble, felt the pulse of the patient and declared that he was suffering from a very violent fever, the St. Anthony's fire;¹ whereupon the poor doctor, without letting himself be seen by anyone, looked under the bed, and lying there he saw by chance some apple peelings, and from the presence of these he rightly judged that the sick man had surfeited himself with apples the night before. Then, after he had felt the gentleman's pulse, he said to him: 'Brother of mine, I perceive that last night you must have eaten of apples, forasmuch as you have now a grave fever upon you.'

¹ Orig., *una febbre molto violēta et formicolare.*

And as the sick man could not deny this speech, seeing that it was the truth, he confessed that he had done as the poor physician had said. After they had prescribed fit remedies for the distemper, the two physicians took their departure.

It came to pass that as they were walking along together the physician who was a man of repute and high standing was greatly inflamed in his heart with envy, and besought insistently of his colleague, the man of low estate and fortune, that he would make known to him what were the symptoms through which he was able to determine that the sick man had been eating apples, promising at the same time to reward him by a generous payment for his own benefit. The poor physician, when he saw how great was the ignorance of the other, answered him in these words, scheming the while how he might bring him to shame: 'Whenever it shall next happen to you that you are summoned to work a cure upon any sick man, be sure that, as soon as ever you enter the room,

you cast your eye under the bed, and whatever in the way of eatables you may see there rest assured that the sick man will have been eating of these. This which I tell you is a noteworthy experiment of the great commentator.' And when he had received from the rich physician a sum of money for his information he went his way.

The next morning it chanced that the rich physician, who bore so high a reputation, was summoned to prescribe a remedy for a certain man who, although he was a peasant, was well to do, and had everything handsome about him.¹ When he went into the bedchamber the first thing the physician saw lying under the bed was the skin of a donkey, and having asked of the sick man certain questions and felt his pulse, he found him suffering from a violent fever, wherefore he said to him: 'I see plainly, my good brother, that last night you indulged in a great debauch and ate freely of donkey's flesh,

¹ Orig., *ben accōmodato*.

and on this account you have run very close to the term of your days.' The peasant, when he listened to these foolish and extravagant words, answered with a laugh: 'Sir, I beg that your excellency will pardon me when I tell you that I never tasted donkey's flesh in all my life, and for the last ten days I have set eyes on no ass but yourself.' And with these words he bade this grave and learned philosopher go about his business, and sent to find another physician who might be more skilled in his art. And thus it appears, as I remarked at the beginning of my tale, that men put a higher value upon riches than upon skill or learning. And if I have been more brief in my story than is seemly, I beg you will pardon me, for I see that the hour is now late, and that you, by the nodding of your heads, have seemed to confirm every statement I have made.

As soon as Madonna Veronica had brought her short story to an end, the Signora, who, like the rest, was nearly

asleep, gave the word to her to bring the night's entertainment to an end with some graceful and modest enigma, because the cock had already announced by his crowing the dawning of the day ; whereupon Madonna Veronica, without demur, thus gave her enigma :

“ Fresh and rosy from your birth,
Honour of heaven and crown of earth,
Strong you are for good or ill,
The round world with your fame you fill.
Should you plead the cause of right,
Then darkness flies before the light.
But if evil be your view,
Rack and ruin dire ensue ;
The massy globe of sea and land
Your hostile touch shall not withstand.

This enigma of mine signifies nothing else than the human tongue, which may be good and also bad. It is red in colour, and it is the honour of heaven, seeing that with it we praise and render thanks to God for all the benefits He grants to us. In like manner it is the crown and the glory of the world when

man puts it to a good and beneficent use, but when he employs it in the contrary sense there is no state, however powerful it may be, which the evil tongue may not destroy and overwhelm. And of this truth I could bring forward examples out of number if the short space of time that yet remains to us, and your weary souls, did not prevent me." And having made a due salutation she sat down.

When this enigma was finished it was received by the company with no scant praise. Then the Signora commanded that the torches should be lighted, and that all should return to their homes, at the same time laying strict command upon them that, on the following evening, they should return, well prepared with a stock of fables, to the accustomed meeting-place, and this command they all promised with one voice to obey.

The End of the Eighth Night.





Right the Ninth.





Night the Ninth.

NHE humid shadows of the dusky night were already beginning to spread over the parched earth, and the sweet birds were gone quietly to sleep in their nests built amongst the leafy branches of the straight standing trees, when the lovesome and honourable company of ladies and gentlemen, having put away far from them all troublesome thoughts and cares, betook themselves to the accustomed place of meeting. And after certain graceful dances had been trodden with stately step, the Signora gave command that the vase should be brought forth and that the names of five of the ladies should be placed therein. Of these the first to be drawn out was that of Diana,¹

¹ No lady of this name is described amongst the

the second that of Lionora, the third that of Isabella, the fourth that of Vicenza, and the fifth that of Fiordiana. But the Signora let them know that it was her wish that, before the story-telling should begin, they should all five of them sing a song to the accompaniment of their lyres. Whereupon the damsels, with joyful faces and smiling as sweetly as if they had been angels, began their song in these words.

SONG.

Forsaken flowerets pale,
Who needs you now to rise in flowery pride ?
Why are our lady's looks thus cast aside ?
 Our lights decay and fail,
And dimmed the sun which kills all other ray,
 The blessed sun, which day by day
Has lighted us by will divine ;
 Just as that gracious face of thine
Has granted to our eyes free course to gaze.
 Ah ! hope so fleeting and malign,

ten original attendants of the Signora. She here appears for the first time, and later on tells a story in the Eleventh Night. But her name is missing when, in the Thirteenth Night, thirteen of the company take a turn at story-telling.

And love, why hast thou barred from us the sight
Of that sweet face, and changed our day to night?

The hearing of this amorous song, which perchance touched the inmost hearts of divers of the company, provoked many deep sighs. But everyone kept closely hidden in the bosom whatever love-secrets may have been there. Then the gentle Diana, knowing well that it was her duty to begin the story-telling of the night, without waiting for further command thus began.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Galafro, King of Spain, persuaded by the words of a chiromantist, who affirmed that his wife would make a wittol of him, builds a tower in which to keep his wife, but she is in the end cozened and enjoyed by Galeotto, the son of Diego, King of Castile.

N like measure, lovesome ladies, as that fidelity, which finds its place in the nature of every honest woman, deserves praise and the highest commendation in the

mouths of all men; so that opposite quality of disloyalty, if by ill-hap it should dominate her character, merits nothing but censure, and in equal degree to be visited with universal castigation and blame. The former stretches forth her arms into all parts, and is greeted by all the world with the most cordial welcome and caresses; while the latter, by reason of her feeble gait and of her defective strength, finds it a hard matter to go forward on her way, and on this account falls at last into miserable case and is forsaken by all. Wherefore, seeing that it is my duty to make a beginning of the story-telling this evening, it has come into my mind to relate to you a fable which may perchance give you somewhat of pleasure and satisfaction.

Once upon a time there reigned over Spain a certain very powerful king, Galafro by name, a man of a very warlike temper, who by his valour conquered many adjacent provinces, which he added

to his dominions. When King Galafro had grown to be an old man, he took to wife a young damsel who was called by name Feliciana. In sooth she was a very fair lady, very courteous in her manner, and fresh as a rose to look upon, and, by reason of her gentleness and gracious carriage, the king her husband loved her exceedingly, taking thought of nothing else than how he might please her. One day it happened that, while the king was passing the time in conversation with a certain man who by common fame was reputed to be exceedingly well skilled in the art of chiromancy, the desire came upon him that this soothsayer should examine his hand in order that he might know what things fortune held in store for him. The chiromantist, when he understood what the king's wish was, took hold of his hand and examined with the greatest care all the lines which were traced therein, and, after he had diligently considered them one and all, he stood silent and grew pale in the face.

The king, remarking that the chiromantist had nothing to say and that his face was all white and confused, was at once fully assured that he must have discovered somewhat in the lines of his hand which was mightily displeasing to him ; but, collecting his courage, he thus addressed him : ‘ Good master, tell me straightway what this thing is you have seen. Have no fear of any kind, because I will cheerfully listen to any declaration you may have to make to me.’

The chiromantist, assured by these words of the king that he might tell what he had seen without restraint, said : ‘ Sacred majesty, of a truth it irks me sorely that I should have come here to tell of things on account of which sorrow and hurt must needs arise. But, seeing that you have given me your good assurance and allowed me to speak, I will reveal to you all I have to say. Know, O king ! that the wife for whom you nourish so ardent a love will one day furnish you with two horns for your

brows, wherefore it is necessary that you should keep a very sharp and diligent watch over her.'

The king, as soon as he understood the purport of these words, fell into such a state that he seemed more dead than alive, and, when he had given strict command to the chiromantist that he should keep the matter a secret, he granted him leave to depart. It came to pass after this that the king, haunted by this distressing thought, and pondering both by day and by night over what the chiromantist had revealed to him, and how he might best steer clear of the rocks of hurt and ignominy which lay before him, made up his mind to shut his wife close in a strong and massy tower, and to have her carefully secured and watched, which thing he straightway carried out. Already the report was spread through all the country how Galafro the king had caused to be built a stronghold, in which he placed the queen his wife under the most jealous guard, but no one

knew what was the cause of her imprisonment. This report in the course of time came to the ears of Galeotto, the son of Diego, King of Castile, who, when he had well deliberated over all he heard of the angelic beauty of the young queen and the advanced age of her husband, and the manner in which he let her pass her days, keeping her shut up a close prisoner in a strong-built tower, resolved to make an attempt to put a trick upon this king, and in the end his scheming led him to the fulfilment of his plans exactly according to his desire.

Galeotto, therefore, for the carrying out of his project, gathered together a great quantity of money and store of rich stuffs, and set forth secretly for Spain; then, having come to his destination, he took two rooms on hire in the house of a certain poor widow. It chanced that one morning early King Galafro mounted his horse, and, together with the whole of his court, went forth to the chase, with the intention of spending several days

abroad. When this news was made known to Galeotto he straightway set his enterprise afoot, and, having put on the raiment of a merchant, and taken divers of his wares of gold and silver which were fairest to look upon and were in themselves of the value of a kingdom, he went forth from the house and took his way through the city, exhibiting the merchandise he had to sell now in this place and now in that. At last, when he had come into the neighbourhood of the tower, he cried out over and over again in a loud voice, 'If anyone wants to buy of my merchandise let him come forward.'

Now the handmaidens of the queen, when they heard the Chapman shouting so loudly in the street, ran forthwith to the window, and, looking down therefrom, they remarked how he had with him all manner of beautiful cloths, embroidered with gold and silver in such wise that it was a delight to gaze thereupon. The damsels ran immediately to

the queen and said to her: 'Oh ! Signora, a little way from here there is a chapman going about with a store of the fairest stuffs ever seen, ware in no way fitting for mere townsfolk, but for kings and princes and noble men of high estate. And amongst these we have espied divers articles which are exactly fitted for your own use and enjoyment, all studded with gems and precious stones.' Whereupon the queen, being earnestly desirous to have sight of wares so lovely as these, besought the keepers of the place that they would suffer the merchant to enter ; but they, fearing mightily lest they should be discovered and ill-handled therefor, had no mind to consent to her request, because the commandment laid upon them by the king was a weighty one, and they would assuredly have to pay with their lives for disregard of the same ; nevertheless, cajoled by the soft and winning speech of the queen and by the lavish promises made by the merchant, they at last gave him free leave to enter.

Then the chapman, having first made to the queen the due and accustomed obeisance, spread out before her eyes the rich and precious things he had brought in. The queen, who was of a sprightly disposition and somewhat bold of temper, as soon as she marked that the merchant was well-seeming and pleasant to look upon, began to throw glances at him out of the corner of her eye¹ in order to rouse in him an amorous feeling. The merchant, who kept his eyes wide open the while, let his looks tell her without doubt that he was entirely of the same mind, and ready to give back love for love. And when the queen had looked at a great number of his things, she said: 'Master merchant, your wares in sooth are very fine: no one can gainsay. But amongst them all this one pleases me mightily, and I would fain know what price you put upon it.' To this the merchant made answer: 'Signora, there is no sum of money in the world which

¹ Orig., *incomincio ballestrarlo con la coda dell' occhio.*

small wonderment that the merchant was thus hotly inflamed with love of her; but when she looked upon him and marked that he was well-favoured and graceful, and considered moreover how cruel was the wrong worked her by her husband in thus keeping her a close prisoner in the tower, she was entirely disposed to follow the drift of her desires. But before she granted to her suitor full compliance, she said, 'Good master, in sooth the strength of love must be mighty, seeing that it has brought me to such a pass that I seem to belong to you rather than to myself. But since that, by the will of fortune, I am as it were under the sway of another, I am content that what we have been discussing should have its issue in deeds, on one condition, which is, that I should keep for myself the wares you have brought hither as the price of my compliance.' The merchant, when he perceived of what a greedy temper the queen was, forthwith took up his costly merchandise and

perceived how kindly the queen looked upon him, and that the whole affair was like to come to the issue he so ardently desired, said to her: 'Signora, of a truth you are the one firm and enduring support of my life. Your angelic beauty, joined to the sweet and kindly welcome you have held out to me, has bound me with so strong a chain that I find it vain to hope I shall ever again be able to free myself therefrom. In sooth I am all afire with love for you, and all the water in the world could never extinguish the ardent flames which consume my heart. I am a wanderer come from a distant land for no other cause than to look upon that rare and radiant beauty which raises you far above every other lady now alive. If you, like the kindly and courteous lady you are, should take me into your favour, you would thereby gain a devoted servant, of whom you might dispose as if he were a part of yourself.' The queen, as soon as she heard these words, was quite overcome, and was seized with no

Queen Feliciana And The Prince
Galeotto

Night the Ninth

FIRST FABLE





handed it over to her as a gift, and the queen, on her part, was overjoyed at the costly and precious wares which the merchant bestowed upon her, proving thereby that her heart was neither as cold as a stone nor as hard as a diamond. Then she took the young man by the hand, and having led him aside into a little chamber adjoining, threw her arms about him and kissed and embraced him ardently. Whereupon the youth, drawing her towards him on the couch, threw himself down beside her, and, having put aside what stood in the way of his enjoyment, he turned towards her, and in their close embracements they tasted together the sweetest joys that lovers may.

Now as soon as the merchant had accomplished his full desire, he took his way out of the chamber, demanding of the queen that she would give him back the wares he had brought with him. She, when she heard what he required of her, was struck with amazement, and, all overcome with grief and shame, thus ad-

dressed him : ‘ Surely it does not become a noble-minded and liberal gentleman to demand a return of anything which he may have given away in good faith. This may indeed be the way of children, who by reason of their tender age have no great store of sense or intellect, but in sooth I am in no mood to hand back to you these wares of yours, seeing that you are come to the years of full understanding, and are very wary and circumspect, and stand in no need of guidance.’ The young man, who was much diverted at this, made answer to her thus : ‘ Signora, if you will not give me what I ask of you, and let me take my leave straightway, I will not quit this place at all until the king shall have come back ; and then his majesty, as a just and upright judge, will cause to be given back to me either the goods or the price thereof.’

The queen, beguiled by these words of the cunning merchant, and fearing lest the king should return and find him there, gave him back his wares, though

greatly against her will. The merchant, having gone out of her presence, was about to make his way forth from the castle when the guards thereof set upon him, demanding payment for the good office they had done him in suffering him to enter. The merchant did not deny that he had promised to give them somewhat, but the promise was made on the condition that he should sell to the queen his merchandise, or at least some part of it. Now, seeing that he had got rid of no portion of it whatever, he did not consider himself bound to give them in payment anything at all ; in sooth he was taking with him out of the castle the selfsame goods as he had brought in. On hearing what he said, the guardians, inflamed with anger and fury, swore that they would on no account let him pass out till he should have paid his shot.¹

But the merchant, who was their master in subtlety, made answer to them thus : ‘ Good brethren, if it be your

¹ Orig., *et prima nō pagava il scotto.*

pleasure to forbid me egress, causing me to tarry here and lose my time, I promise you I will not budge from hence until your king shall have come back. Then he, as a high-minded and just sovereign, shall give judgment on the question between us.' Whereupon the guardians, who were greatly afraid lest the king should return, and, finding the young man there, should forthwith cause them to be put to death for disobedience, threw the doors of the castle open to the merchant and let him go out at his pleasure. Having got free of the castle, and left therein the queen with a greater store of shame and vexation than of costly goods, he began to cry out in the streets with a loud voice, 'I know well enough all about it, but I have no mind to tell. I know well enough all about it, but I have no mind to tell.'

At this juncture King Galafro returned to the city from his hunting, and hearing from afar the clamour which the merchant was making, was mightily

diverted thereanent, and, when he had come to the palace and repaired to the tower wherein the queen was kept in hold, he went to her apartment, and instead of greeting her in his accustomed manner, he said jestingly : ' Madama, I know well enough all about it, but I have no mind to tell ; ' and these words he repeated several times. The queen, when she heard this speech of her husband, was seized with the thought that what he said was in real earnest, and not by way of jest, and stood as if she were dead. Then, trembling in every limb, she fell down at the king's feet, saying, ' O my lord and king ! know that I have been a false wife to you ; still I beg you graciously to pardon my heinous fault, although there is no sort of death I do not deserve therefor. Trusting in your mercy I hope to get your grace and pardon.' The king, who knew nought as to the meaning of the words of the queen, was mightily astonished, and commanded her to rise to her feet and give him a full

account of what might be troubling her. Whereupon the queen, with trembling voice and plentiful weeping, and speaking as one bereft of her wits, told him her adventure from beginning to end. The king, when he thoroughly understood the matter, spake thus to her: 'Madama, be of good cheer, and cease to disquiet yourself so pitifully, because whatever heaven wills to be must of a certainty come to pass.' And the king forthwith gave orders that the tower should be razed to the ground, and accorded to his wife full liberty to do whatsoever she would, in which state they lived happily and joyfully; while Galeotto, having victoriously carried out his intent, made his way home, carrying all his goods with him.

This fable told by Diana in the foregoing words pleased the company mightily, but they were much astonished that the queen should have been led to bring to light so easily her hidden fault, holding that she would have done better to

suffer death a thousand-fold than to take upon herself such a scandalous disgrace. But fortune was kind to her, and kinder still was the king, who, by his pardon and by the strength of the love he had for her, set her at liberty. And now, in order to suffer the other damsels to go on with their story-telling, the Signora gave the word to Diana to propound her enigma forthwith, and she, when she heard the commandment of the Signora, spake it in these words :

Flying from their northern home
Cruel white-clad wanderers come ;
Pitiless they smite to death,
And rob the sons of men of breath.
Round head and feet alike they spread,
And men are whelmed beneath the dead.
Here and there they take their flight ;
On every hearth the fire burns bright.
And there men come and safe abide,
Protected from the foe outside.

Diana's enigma was a source of great pleasure to all the listeners, some of them interpreting it in one fashion and some

in another; but very few gathered its real meaning. Then Diana expounded it in these terms: "This enigma of mine is intended to describe the white snow, which falls down in great flakes, and comes from the north, and without ceasing alights upon everyone—especially in the season of great cold—and there is no place to be found where men can shelter themselves therefrom." As soon as she had thus excellently set forth the meaning of her enigma, Lionora rose from her seat, which was beside Diana's, and in the following words made a beginning of her fable.

THE SECOND FABLE.

Rodolino, son of Lodovico, King of Hungary, becomes enamoured of Violante, the daughter of Domitio, a tailor. But Rodolino, having met his death, Violante, distracted by her exceeding grief, falls dead in the church upon the body of her lover.

 F the passion of love be guided by the spirit of gentleness, and by the modesty and temperance which commonly are found united thereto, it seldom happens that it does not run to a prosperous issue. But when it delivers itself up to the promptings of voracious and inordinate appetite, it becomes a scourge to men and will often lead them to a terrible and disastrous end. The issue of the fable I am about to relate to you will let you see the reason of this, my brief homily.

I must tell you, gracious ladies, that Lodovico, King of Hungary, had an only son named Rodolino, and this youth,

albeit he was still of tender years, was tormented nevertheless by the burning pricks of love. Now it chanced that one day, while Rodolino was standing at the window of his chamber and turning over in his mind memories of divers incidents in which he had heretofore taken much pleasure, his eye fell by chance upon a maiden, the daughter of a certain tailor. On account of the beauty and modesty and gentle manners of the girl he became so hotly enamoured of her that he could no longer enjoy any rest. The maiden, whose name was Violante, was not long in learning the nature of Rodolino's love towards her, and on her part was fired with a passion for him as ardent as his for her; so that when it chanced for a season that she failed to get sight of him she felt like to die. And as this mutual affection between the two increased day by day, Love, who is ever the faithful guide and the sure light of every gentle soul, brought it to pass that at last the maiden took courage to speak to Rodo-

lino. The prince, happening to be at the window, and knowing the while well enough that Violante now gave him full return for his love of her, thus spake to her: 'Violante, of a truth you must know that the love I have towards you is so great that nothing but the coming of cruel gloomy death will ever quench it in my heart. Your most laudable and gracious bearing, your sincere and modest manners, your lovely eyes which shine brightly as the stars, and all the other excellencies with which you are abundantly endowed, have so powerfully drawn me on to love you that I have resolved never to take to wife any other woman but yourself.' And Violante, who, although she was young in years, was astute in mind, made answer to him that, although he might love her as ardently as he declared, yet she loved him still more dearly. Furthermore, she affirmed that her love was not to be compared with his, seeing that a man does not love with his whole heart, but that his passion is often

light and vain, and prone to lead a woman, who loves supremely, to a wretched end.

When Rodolino heard those words he cried out, 'Alas, my soul, speak not in this wise! Of a surety, if you yourself felt one thousandth part of the love I bear to you, you would never use such hard words; and, if you still find yourself unable to believe me, put me to the test straightway, and then you will learn whether I really love you or not.'

Not long after this it happened that King Lodovico, the father of Rodolino, was made cognizant of his son's passion for Violante, and was deeply grieved in his heart thereanent, because he feared amain lest some mischance might ensue which would prove to be a reproach and a disgrace to his kingdom. Therefore, without letting Rodolino perceive that he knew aught of this matter, he determined to despatch him forthwith to travel into divers far countries, so that the lapse of time and long distance might work in him forgetfulness of this un-

toward love of his. Wherefore the king, having one day called his son into his presence, said to him: 'Rodolino, my son, you know that we have no other children but yourself, and that in the course of nature it is not likely that any others will be born to us, so that the kingdom, after our death, must fall to you as our rightful heir. Now, in order that you may grow up a prudent and far-seeing man, and in due time and place may wisely and well rule this your kingdom, I have determined to send you for a while into Austria, where lives Lambérico, your uncle on your mother's side. There, also, you will find many learned men, who, for love of us, will give you wise instruction, and under their care and discipline you will become a prudent and lettered man.'

When Rodolino heard these words of the king he was sorely dismayed, and stood almost as one struck dumb; but, after he had recovered himself somewhat, he answered: 'My father, although it

will be to me a cause of grief and sorrow to be obliged to part from your presence — seeing that on this account I shall no longer live in the company of my dear mother and of yourself — yet, if such be your pleasure, I will at once obey this command of yours.' The king, when he heard the dutiful answer made by his son, wrote a letter forthwith to Lamberico his brother-in-law, in which he set forth fully the whole matter, commanding Rodolino to him as something as precious as his own life. The prince, when he had promised thus fully to obey his father's commands, grieved bitterly in silence; but, seeing that he could not honourably go back from his pledged word, he determined to carry it out.

Before, however, he took his departure from the city he found an opportunity of speaking face to face with Violante, desiring to instruct her as to how she should order her life until the time of his return, and how best the great love subsisting between them might be

maintained. Therefore, when they were come together, Rodolino said: 'Violante, in obedience to my father's wishes I am about to separate myself from you in the body, but not in the heart, forasmuch as, wherever I may be, I will always remember you. I now conjure you, by the love which I have borne for you in the past and bear for you now and will ever bear for you till the end of my life, that you will never allow yourself to be joined in matrimony to any other man; for, as soon as I return to this place, I will without fail make you my own lawful wife. In token of this my flawless faith, take this ring and hold it ever dear to you.' Violante, when she heard this sad news, was almost ready to die of grief; but, having recollected her wandering wits, she answered: 'My lord, would to God that I had never known you, for then I should not have fallen into the cruel case in which I now find myself! But since it is the will of heaven and of my fortune that you should thus go away

from me, I beg at least that you will tell me whether your absence from home will be long or short; for, supposing that you should stay away a long time, I might not be able to withstand the commands of my father, should he wish me to marry.'

To this Rodolino made answer: 'Violante, do not thus bemoan yourself, but be of good cheer, for before a year shall have run its course you will see me back again. If, however, at the end of a year I do not return, I give you full permission to marry.' And, having spoken these words, with many tears and sighs he took leave of her, and the next morning, having mounted his horse in good time, he set forth towards Austria, accompanied by a goodly retinue.

When he had come to his journey's end, he was honourably welcomed by Lamberico his uncle, but in spite of his kindly reception Rodolino continued to be mightily borne down by the sorrow and love-sickness he felt on account

of his beloved Violante whom he had left behind him, nor could he find any solace for his grief, although the young men of the court were very assiduous in providing for him all manner of fitting pleasure and recreation.

Thus Rodolino remained in Austria, having his mind all the while taken up with sorrow and with thoughts of his dear Violante, and it chanced that the year came to an end without his taking note thereof. As soon, however, as he became aware that a whole twelvemonth had rolled away, he begged of his uncle leave that he might return home to see his father and his mother, and Lambmerico at once acceded to his wish. When Rodolino returned to his father's kingdom the king and queen caused great rejoicings to be made, and soon after these had been brought to an end, it was noised about the court that Violante, the daughter of Messer Domitio the tailor, was married, whereupon the king rejoiced greatly, but Rodolino was

plunged in the deepest grief, lamenting bitterly in his heart that he himself had been the real cause of this cruel mischance. The unhappy young man, finding himself continually a victim to this wretched sorrow, and not knowing where to look for a remedy for the amorous passion which consumed him, wellnigh died of grief.

But Love, who never neglects his true followers, and always brings punishment to those who take no heed of their vows, devised a means by which Rodolino was able once more to find himself in the presence of Violante. One night, Rodolino, without the knowledge of Violante, silently entered the chamber where she lay in bed with her husband, and, having stealthily crept between the bed and the wall, he lifted the curtain, and slipped quietly underneath it, and placed his hand softly on Violante's bosom. She, who had no thought that Rodolino was anywhere near her, when she felt herself touched by someone who was not

her husband, made as if she would cry out, whereupon Rodolino, having put his hand over her mouth, checked her cry and told her who he was. Violante, as soon as she heard that the man beside her was in truth Rodolino, nearly went out of her wits, and a great fear came over her lest he might be discovered by her husband ; so, as gently and discreetly as she could, she pushed him away from her, and would not allow him to kiss her. Rodolino, as soon as he was aware of this action of hers, persuaded himself that his beloved mistress had entirely forgotten him, seeing that she thus repulsed him ; so, casting about in vain for any consolation in the dire and heavy sorrow which weighed upon him, he said : ' Oh, cruel Violante, rest content now at least that my life is coming to an end, and that your eyes will no longer be troubled by the sight of me ! Peradventure later on the time will come when you will fall into a more pitiful mood, and will perforce be constrained to feel sorrow for

your cruelty towards me. Alas! how is it possible that the great love which you formerly had for me should now have fled entirely?' And while he thus spake he clasped Violante in a close embrace, kissing her ardently whether she willed it or not. So great in sooth was his passion, that he began to feel his soul passing from his body; wherefore, collecting all his forces and uttering one deep sigh, he yielded up his wretched life as he lay by Violante's side.

The unhappy woman, as soon as she perceived that Rodolino was indeed dead, became as one bereft of reason, but after a little began to deliberate with herself as to what she should do in order to keep from her husband all knowledge of the sad mischance which had fallen upon her; so she let fall, without making any disturbance, the corpse of Rodolino into the alcove beside the bed. Then, feigning to be disturbed by a dream, she shrieked aloud, whereupon her husband straightway awoke from

sleep and asked her what had happened to cause her this alarm. Violante, trembling in every limb and half dead with fear, told him that in her dream it had appeared to her as if Rodolino, the king's son, had been lying by her side, and had died suddenly in her arms, and rising from her bed, she found lying there in the alcove the dead body, which was yet warm. The husband of Violante, when he saw the strange thing that had happened, was mightily disturbed in mind, and feared greatly lest he might lose his own life on account of this ill-starred accident; but, casting aside his fears, he took the dead body of Rodolino on his shoulders, and, having gone out of the house without being seen of anyone, he laid it down at the gates of the royal palace.

The king, as soon as the sad news had been brought to him, was fain to make an end of his life on account of the grief and anger which assailed him, but later on, when his frenzy had somewhat sub-

sided, he bade them summon the physicians, in order that they might see the corpse of Rodolino, and certify the cause of his death. The physicians, after they had separately examined the dead body, declared, one and all, that he had met his death, not by steel nor by poison, but through sheer grief. As soon as the king heard this, he gave orders for the funeral obsequies to be got in order, directing that the corpse should be carried into the cathedral, and that every woman of the city, of whatsoever rank and condition she might be, should, under pain of his high displeasure, go up to the spot where the bier was standing and kiss his dead son. Thither many of the city matrons repaired, and, for very pity, plentifully bewept the fate of the unhappy Rodolino, and amongst these came the wretched Violante. For a desire had come over her to look once more upon the dead face of him to whom, when he was alive, she refused the consolation of a single kiss. Wherefore, throwing her-

self down upon the corpse, and feeling certain in her mind that it was by reason of his great love for her that he was now lying there dead, she determined to die likewise; so, holding back her breath with all her force, she passed away from this life without a word. The other women, when they perceived what unlooked-for thing had occurred, ran to succour her, but all their labour was in vain, for her soul had verily departed from her body, and had gone to seek that of Rodolino her lover. The king, who was privy to the love subsisting between Violante and his son, kept the whole matter a secret, and gave orders that the two should be buried in one tomb.

As soon as Lionora had finished her pitiful story, the Signora made a sign to her to complete her duty by propounding her enigma, and the damsels, without any hesitation, spake as follows:

Left in peace I never move;
But should a foe desire to prove

His mettle on me, straight I fly
Right over wall and roof-tree high.
If driven by a stroke of might,
I take, though wingless, upward flight ;
No feet have I, yet 'tis my way
To jump and dance both night and day ;
No rest I feel what time my foe
May will that I a-flying go.
No end and no beginning mine,
So strange my nature and design ;
And they who see me on the wing
May deem me well a living thing.

The greater part of the listeners comprehended the meaning of this enigma, which, in sooth, was intended to signify the tennis ball, which, being round in form, has neither end nor beginning, and is attacked by the players as a foe, and is driven by them now here now there, being struck by the hand. Isabella, to whom had been allotted the third place in the story-telling, rose from her seat and began to speak in the following words.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Francesco Sforza, the son of Lodovico Moro, Duke of Milan, follows a stag in the chase and becomes separated from his companions. Then, having taken refuge in the hut of certain peasants, who take counsel together how they may kill him, he is delivered by a child, who has become privy to the plot of the traitors, and the villains are afterwards quartered alive.



HE fable just narrated to us by Lionora opens out to me a wide field to tell you of a very piteous adventure, which, in truth, may be held to belong to history rather than to fiction, seeing that it happened to the son of a duke, who, after many tribulations, brought it to pass that his enemies were made to taste a bitter punishment for the offences they had wrought.

I will tell you then that, in these our times, there lived in Milan Signor Francesco Sforza, the son of Lodovico Moro, the ruler of the city, a youth who, both

during the lifetime of his father, and after his death, suffered much from the bolts of envious fortune. In his early youth Signor Francesco was of graceful figure, of courtly manners, with a face which gave fair token of his righteous inclinations, and when he was come to that age which marks the full bloom of youth—his studies and all the other becoming exercises being finished—he gave himself up to the practice of arms, to throwing the lance and following the chase, gathering from this manner of life no little pleasure. Wherefore, on account of his converse and of his prowess in manly exercises, all the young men of the city held him in great affection, and he, on his part, was equally well disposed towards them. In sooth, there was no youth at all in the city who did not partake in a share of his bounty.

One morning the Signor Francesco gathered together for his pleasure a goodly company of young men, of whom not one had yet reached his twentieth year, and,

having mounted his horse, rode away with them to follow the chase. And when they had come to a certain thicket, which was well known as the haunt of wild animals, they surrounded it on all sides, and soon it chanced that, on the side of the wood where Signor Francesco was keeping a vigilant watch, there broke forth a very fine stag, which, as soon as it beheld the hunters, fled away from them in terror. Francesco, who had the heart of a lion, and was likewise a perfect horseman, no sooner marked how rapid was the flight of the stag than he struck his spurs deep into his horse's sides and dashed away impetuously in pursuit, and so long and so far did he follow it that, having outridden all his companions, he found he had missed his way. Then, because he had lost sight of the stag, he gave up the pursuit, not knowing where he was or whither he should turn. Finding himself left alone and far away from the high road, and wotting nought as to how he should make his way back there-

to—seeing that the dark shadows of night were fast gathering around—he lost his wits somewhat, and was in no small fear lest there should happen to him some mischance which would not be to his taste. And so indeed it fell out.

Signor Francesco took his way onward and onward through the dubious paths, and finally came upon a small cottage with a roof of straw, and of very mean and ill aspect. Having ridden into the yard he got down from his horse, which he made fast to the fence which was built around, and straightway went into the cottage, where he found an old man, whose years must have numbered ninety at least, and by his side was a young peasant woman, very fair to look upon, who held in her arms a five-year-old child, to whom she was giving nourishment. Signor Francesco, having made polite salutation to the old man and the young peasant woman, sat down with them and asked them whether of their kindness they would be willing to give him shelter

and lodging for the night, not letting them know, however, who he was.

The old man and the young woman, who was his daughter-in-law, when they saw that the youth was of high station and of graceful seeming, willingly made him welcome, putting forth many excuses the while that they had no place for his accommodation at all worthy of his condition. Francesco, having thanked them heartily, went out of the cottage to have care for his horse, and after he had duly seen to its wants he entered once more. The child, who was very lovesome, ran up to the gentleman's side with all manner of affectionate greeting and covered him with caresses, and Francesco on his part kissed the little one with many soft words and blandishments. While Signor Francesco was standing talking in familiar wise with the greybeard and his daughter-in-law, Malacarne, the son of the old man and the husband of the young woman, came home, and having entered the cottage, espied the gentleman who was chat-

ting with the old man and caressing the child. He bade Signor Francesco good evening, getting a courteous return of his greeting, and gave orders to his wife that she should forthwith get ready the supper.

The master of the house then addressed Signor Francesco and begged to know what was the reason which had brought him into so savage and desert a place, and to this question the youth by way of explanation replied, 'Good brother, the reason why I have come to this place is simply because, finding myself alone upon my journey at the fall of the night, and not knowing whither to betake myself through being somewhat ill-informed as to the features of this country, I discovered by good luck this little cottage of yours, into which this good old father and your wife in their kindness bade me enter.' Malacarne, as he listened to the speech of the youth and marked how richly he was attired, and how he wore a fine chain of gold

about his neck, of a sudden conceived a design against Francesco, and made up his mind, at all hazard, to first slay and then despoil him. Therefore, being firmly set upon carrying out this diabolical project of his, he called together his old father and his wife, and, having taken the child in his arms, went forth from the cottage. Then, when he had drawn them aside somewhat, he made with them a compact to slay the youth, and after they should have taken off from him his rich raiment to bury his body in the fields, persuading themselves that, when this should be done, no further report would ever be heard of him.

But God, who is altogether just, would not suffer these wicked schemings to come to the issue the miscreants desired, but brought all their secret design to light. As soon as the compact was finally made and their evil plans fully determined, it came into Malacarne's mind that he by himself alone would never

be able to carry out the plan they had formed. And, besides this, his father was old and decayed, and his wife a woman of little courage, and the youth, as Malacarne had already remarked, seemed to be gifted with a stout heart, and one who would assuredly make a good fight for his life, and perhaps escape out of their hands. On this account he resolved to repair to a certain place, not far distant from his cottage, and to enlist the services of three other ruffians well known to him who dwelt there, and then, with their aid, fully carry out his design. As soon as these three worthies understood what he would have them do, they at once consented to follow him, greedy of the gain he promised them, and having caught up their weapons, they all went to Malacarne's cottage.

There the child, having left the place where her mother and grandfather were together, returned to Francesco and gave him greetings and caresses more lovesome even than before, whereupon the

young man, observing the very loving ways the little one used towards him, took her in his arms and caressed her tenderly and kissed her again and again. The child, seeing the glitter of the chain of gold about his neck, and being greatly delighted therewith (as is the manner often with children) laid hands upon the chain and showed that she would fain have it round her own neck. Signor Francesco, when he saw what great delight the child took in the chain, said to her as he caressed her, 'See here, my little one, I will give you this for your own.' And with these words he put it about her neck. The child, who had by some means or other become privy to the business that was afoot, said to Francesco without further words, 'But it would have been mine all the same without your having given it to me, because my father and mother are going to kill you and to take away all you have.' Francesco, who was of a shrewd and wary temper, as soon as he realized from the

words of the child the wicked designs which were being woven against him, did not let the warning pass unheeded, but prudently holding his peace he rose up from his seat, carrying the child in his arms, having the collar about her neck, and laid her down upon a little bed, whereupon she, because the hour was now late, forthwith fell asleep. Then Signor Francesco shut himself close in the cottage, and, having made secure the entrance by piling up against the door two large chests of wood, awaited courageously to see what the ruffians without might do next. Then he drew from his side a small firearm, having five barrels, which might be discharged all together or one by one, according to will.

As soon as the young gentlemen who had ridden a-hunting with Signor Francesco found that he had strayed away from their company without leaving any trace to tell them whither he might be gone, they began to give signal to him by sounding their horns and shouting,





Francesco Warned By The
Child's Words

Night the Ninth

THIRD FABLE





but no reply came back to them. And on this account they began to be greatly afeared lest the horse he rode might have fallen amongst the loose rocks, and that their lord might be lying dead or perhaps eaten by wild beasts. While the young courtiers were thus standing all terror-stricken, and knowing not which way to turn, one of the company at last cried out, 'I marked Signor Francesco following a stag along this forest path, and taking his course towards that wide valley, but, seeing that the horse he rode was swifter in its pace by far than mine, I could not hold him in sight, nor could I tell whither he went.' As soon as the others heard and understood this speech, they at once set out on their quest, following the slot of the stag all through the night in the anticipation of finding Signor Francesco either dead or alive.

While the young men were thus riding through the woods, Malacarne, accompanied by the three villains his comrades,

was making his way back towards his house. They deemed that they would be able to enter therein without hindrance, but on approaching the door they found it fast shut. Then Malacarne kicked at it with his foot and said, 'Open to me, good friend. Why is it you keep thus closed the door of my house?' Signor Francesco kept silence and gave not a word in reply; but, peeping through a crevice, he espied Malacarne, who carried an axe upon his shoulder, and the three other ruffians with him fully armed. He had already charged his firearm, and now, without further tarrying, he put it to the crevice of the door and let off one of the barrels, striking one of the three miscreants in the breast in such fashion that he fell dead to the ground forthwith, without finding time to confess his sins. Malacarne, when he perceived what had happened, began to hack violently at the door with his axe in order to bring it down, but this intent he was unable to

carry out, seeing that it was secured on the other side. Francesco again discharged his pistolet with such good fortune that he disabled another of the band by shooting him in the right arm. Whereupon those who were yet left alive were so hotly inflamed with anger that they worked with all their force to break open the door, making the while such a hideous rout that it seemed as if the world must be coming to an end. Francesco, who felt no small terror at the strait in which he was placed, set to work to strengthen yet further the door by piling up against it all the stools and benches he could find.

Now it is well known that, the brighter and finer the night, the more still and silent it is, and a single word, though it be spoken a long way off, may at such times be easily heard; wherefore on this account the hurlyburly made by these ruffians came to the ears of Francesco's companions. They at once closed their ranks, and, giving their horses free rein,

quickly arrived at the spot from whence came the uproar, and saw the assassins labouring hard to break down the door. One of the company of young gentlemen at once questioned them what might be the meaning of all the turmoil and uproar they were making, and to this Malacarne made answer: 'Signori, I will tell you straightway. This evening, when I came back to my cottage weary with toil, I found there a young soldier, a lusty fellow full of life. And for the reason that he attempted to kill my old father, and to ravish my wife, and to carry off my child, and to despoil me of all my goods, I took to flight, as I was in no condition to defend myself. Then, seeing to what sore strait I was reduced, I betook myself to the dwellings of certain of my friends and kinsmen, and besought them to give me their aid; but, when we returned to my cottage, we found the door shut and so strongly barricaded within that there was no making entrance, unless we should

first break down the door. And not satisfied with outraging my wife, he has also (as you may well see) slain with his firearm one of my friends and wounded another to death. Wherefore, finding it beyond my endurance to put up with such ill-handling as this, I have made up my mind to lay hands on him dead or alive.'

The young men in attendance upon Signor Francesco perceiving what had happened, and believing Malacarne's tale to be true on account of the dead body lying on the ground before them and of the other man gravely wounded, were moved to pity, and having dismounted from their horses, cried out loud, 'Ah, traitor and enemy of God, open the door at once! What is it you are doing? In sooth you shall suffer the penalty due to your misdeeds.' To this Francesco answered nought, but carefully and dexterously went on strengthening the door on the inside, knowing not that his friends stood without. And

while the young men went on with their battering without being able, in spite of all the force they used, to open the door, a certain one of them, having gone a little apart, espied in the yard a horse tied to the fence, and, as soon as he had drawn anigh thereto, he knew it to be the horse of Signor Francesco, so he cried out in a loud voice, 'Hold off, my comrades, and let go the work you are about, because our master is surely within there ;' and with these words he pointed out to them the horse tied to the fence. The young men, as soon as they saw and recognized the horse, were at once convinced that Signor Francesco was shut up within the cottage, and straightway they called upon him by name, rejoicing greatly the while. Francesco, when he heard himself thus called, knew that his friends were at hand, and, being now freed from all dread of his life, he cleared away his defences from the door and opened it. And when they heard the reason why he had shut

himself up so closely, they seized the two ruffians, and, having bound them securely, carried them back to Milan, where, after they had first been tormented with burning pincers, they were torn in quarters, while living, by four horses. The little child by whose agency the nefarious plot was found out was called Verginea, and her Signor Francesco gave in charge to the duchess, in order that she might be well and carefully brought up. And when she had come to an age ripe for marriage, as a reward for the great service she had rendered to Signor Francesco she was amply dowered and honourably given in marriage to a gentleman of noble descent. And after this they gave her in addition the castle of Binasio, situated between Milan and Pavia, which in this our day has been so sorely vexed by continual broils and attacks that of it there hardly remains one stone on another. And in this sad and terrible fashion the murderous thieves made a wretched end,

while the damsel and her husband lived many years in great happiness.

All the listeners were quite as strongly affected by pity as by astonishment while they listened to this touching fable. But as soon as the happy issue thereof was declared, they all recovered their gladness, whereupon the Signora gave her command to Isabella that she should forthwith set before them her enigma, and she, with her eyes yet moist with tears, spake thus in modest manner:

Good sirs, amongst us here doth dwell
A thing whose seeming none can tell;
Though far away from us it flies,
Secret at home the while it lies.
At last the fatal day doth come,
It leaves for aye its wonted home:
To it the power divine is given
To scan all things in earth and heaven,
Survey the world from place to place,
Within a single breathing space.
Now who can craftily combine,
And read aright these words of mine.

Isabella's learned and subtle enigma

gave great pleasure to all the listeners, but there was not a single one gifted with understanding acute enough to disentangle its meaning; so Isabella in her modest way thus expounded it: "My enigma means the ever-varying thoughts of men's minds, which are invisible and run into every place, though at the same time they abide ever with the man in whose brain they are formed. Thought remains in one spot, it wanders around, and no one knows where; but, though it permeates every sphere of man's intellect, it still remains with him, and is the source from which infinite and varied phenomena take their rise." Weighty and subtle indeed was the solution of Isabella's enigma, and there was not one of the company who was not entirely satisfied therewith. Vicenza, who knew that it was now her turn to speak, waited for no further command from the Signora, but began her fable in the following words.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Pre Papirò Schizza makes pretence of great learning, but in truth knows nothing. Like an ignorant fool he flouts the son of a certain peasant, who by way of revenge sets fire to his house and destroys it and all therein.

 F we, kindly ladies, were to investigate with due diligence how great the number of fools and ignorant persons around us might be, we would find it an easy matter to set them down as too numerous to be counted. And if we should be desirous to know, in addition, what are the mischances which arise from ignorance, it would behove us to consult experience, the teacher of all things, and she, like a kindly mother, would duly instruct us. Now in order that we may not, as the vulgar say, go away with our hands full of flies,¹ I will here tell you that from ignorance there springs,

¹ Orig., *con le mani piene di mosche.*

amongst other vices, that one which men call vanity, the real foundation of every ill and the source of every human error, seeing that an ignorant man is ever prone to claim acquaintance with subjects concerning which he knows nought, and will desire to show himself to the world in a character which he has no claim to assume. It happened in this wise to a certain village priest, who accounted himself to be a man of learning, but who was, in truth, the greatest numskull nature ever created; and this man, cajoled by his imagined knowledge, lost in the end all his worldly riches, and narrowly escaped with his life, as you will be able to understand clearly from the following fable—a story which, perchance, you may have heard before.

I must tell you that in the territory of Brescia, a very rich, noble, and populous city, there lived, no great time ago, a priest whose name was Papiro Schizza, the rector of the church of the village of Bedicuollo, a place situate not far dis-

tant from the city. This man, who was really a grossly ignorant loon, was wont to assume the part of the scholar and to exhibit himself to anyone he might meet as a person of parts and learning; wherefore the country people round about regarded him with great favour, and honoured and esteemed him as a man of deep science.

It happened that, on the occasion of the celebration of the day of Saint Maccario, it was appointed by the bishop that a pious and solemn procession should be made in Brescia, a special charge having been issued to all the priests of the city, as well as to those of the villages round about, that, under the penalty of a fine of five ducats, they should present themselves *cum cappis et coctis*¹ to do honour to this solemn festival, as was deserving to the memory of so pious a saint. In his round the bishop's nuncio went to the village of

¹ With copes and tunics. "Cocta," *tunica clericis propria*.

Bedicuollo, and having found Messer Pre Papiro at home, he delivered to him the summons of monsignor the bishop that he should, under the penalty of five ducats, duly repair to the cathedral of Brescia on the day of Saint Macario *cum cappis et coctis*, in order that he might, together with the other priests, pay the reverence that was due to the appointed celebration. When the nuncio had taken his leave, Messer Pre Papiro began to consider and to turn over in his mind what might be the purport of this summons which directed him to attend the solemn festival *cum cappis et coctis*, and pondering at hazard, now here, now there, he cudgelled his brains, by the aid of the small knowledge and learning he possessed, in order to beat out of them peradventure some notion as to the significance of the aforesaid words. After he had spent some time in struggling to grasp their meaning, it occurred to him at last that *cappis et coctis* must needs mean capons cooked, and nothing

else. Having satisfied himself, like the fool he was, that this interpretation was the right one, without taking counsel of anyone else he picked out a pair of his finest capons and gave orders to his housekeeper to cook them with the greatest care.

When the following morning had come Pre Papiro mounted his horse at break of day, and, having ordered the capons to be placed in a dish, he carried them with him to Brescia and presented himself forthwith before monsignor the bishop, to whom he gave the roast capons, at the same time saying that he had received a command from the nuncio to come and do honour to the feast of San Macario *cum cappis et coctis*, and, in order to carry out these instructions to the letter, he had brought with him a pair of capons well cooked. The bishop, who was both wily and astute, and at the same time fond of a joke, marked that the capons were fat and well roasted, and, when he understood what an ignorant

fool the priest really was, he was forced to press his lips tight together in order that he might not laugh aloud ; so with a face full of merriment and good humour he accepted the capons, and in return gave Pre Papiro a thousand thanks.¹ Now Messer Pre Papiro, though he heard these words of the bishop clearly enough, had no inkling of their meaning through being such a stupid fellow, but deemed in his own mind that what the bishop meant by *mille gratis* was that he further required of him a thousand brushwood hurdles.² Whereupon the stupid loon, falling down on his marrowbones at the feet of the bishop, cried out : ‘ Monsignor, I pray you by the love which you bear to God, and by the high reverence in which I hold you, that you will not lay so heavy a burden upon me, forasmuch as our village is sore stricken with poverty, and to supply a thousand brushwood hurdles would be too grievous a tax for such poor folk as we are ;

¹ *Resegli mille gratis.* ² *Grato*, a hurdle.

but at the same time, if five hundred hurdles will content you, I will promise that you shall have them whenever you may want them.' The bishop, although he was a man of keen wit, failed altogether to understand what was the meaning of Pre Papiro's words, but, in order that it might not be apparent how he had missed the drift of them, he agreed to the priest's proposal without saying a word thereanent.

Pre Papiro, as soon as the festival was over, took leave of the bishop, and, having duly received his benediction, returned to his own house. When he got home he collected all the waggons of the village, and after he had caused them to be laden with brushwood hurdles, he sent them into the city on the following morning as a present to the bishop. The bishop, when he saw the wagon-loads of hurdles and heard who it was who had sent them, burst into loud laughter and made no scruple about accepting them, and in this fashion the lubberly

fool of a priest, through feigning knowledge which he possessed not, lost both his capons and his hurdles, and was put to shame and dishonour at the same time.

It happened that in the aforesaid village of Bedicuollo there lived a certain peasant, Gianotto by name, who, although he was a mere peasant and able neither to read nor to write, entertained nevertheless such a profound reverence for scholars of all kinds that, for their sakes, he would willingly have become a slave in chains. This man had a son, a youth of goodly aspect, and one who gave fair signs of growing up to be a man of science and a scholar, and Pirino was his name. Gianotto, who held his son in great affection, made up his mind to send the youth to study at Padua, resolving at the same time not to let him stand in need of any of the things which a student might require, and in the course of time he fully carried out this resolution. After having passed certain

months in Padua, the youth, who was now well grounded in the grammarian's art, returned to his home, not, indeed, to abide there, but to pay a short visit to his parents and his friends. Gianotto, who was very anxious to do honour to his son, and at the same time curious to learn whether he was getting any profit from his studies, determined to bid his relations and friends to a fine feast at his house, and beg Messer Pre Papiro to come likewise, and then and there to examine Pirino in the presence of them all, in order that they might judge whether or not he was spending his time and labour in vain.

When the day of the feast had come, all the relations and friends of the family came together at the house of Gianotto in answer to the invitation they had received, and after the benediction had been pronounced by Messer Pre Papiro, they all sat down at the table according to their age. When the dinner was finished and the board cleared, Gianotto

rose to his feet, and said: 'Messer Papiro, I greatly desire (should it likewise be the pleasure of all here present) that you should now examine Pirino, my son, in order that we may see whether he may be gaining aught of good from his studies.' To this Messer Pre Papiro answered: 'Gianotto, my good gossip, the burden that you would lay upon me by this request of yours is as nothing at all compared with what I would willingly do for you. It is in sooth a very trifling matter for a man of my capabilities.' Then turning his face towards Pirino, who sat over against him, he said: 'Pirino, my son, we are all come together here for one and the same end. We all of us desire to promote your honour; therefore we are curious to know whether you have well spent your time while you have been studying in Padua; so, for the satisfaction of Gianotto, your good father, and for the contentment of this honourable company, I will now proceed to examine you in the subjects

you have been studying, and if (as we all hope you may) you acquit yourself worthily, it will be a cause of no small gratification to your father and his friends and to myself. Tell me, therefore, Pirino, my son, what is the Latin for a priest?' Pirino, who was exceedingly well versed in all the rules of grammar, answered with confidence, '*Presbyter*.' Pre Papiro, when he heard the prompt and ready answer which Pirino gave to his question, said, 'But how can it be *Presbyter*, my son? Of a truth you are mightily mistaken.' But Pirino, who was well assured of his knowledge, answered boldly that the word which he had given was indeed the right one, and advanced many authorities to prove it. Upon this there arose between the examiner and the pupil a long dispute, Pre Papiro being in no wise willing to give way to the superior intelligence of the youth, and finally, having turned to those who sat at table, spake these words: 'Tell me, my dear brothers and sons,

supposing that in the middle of the night something should happen to you of so grave a nature that you should wish to confess your sins, or require the eucharist, or any other sacrament which might be necessary for the salvation of your souls, would you not send forthwith to fetch the priest? Most assuredly! And then what would you do first? Would you not knock at the priest's door? Of a surety you would. Then would you not say, "Hey presto, presto, good sir! Get up at once, and come as quickly as you can to give the sacraments to a sick man who is at the point of death"?" The peasants sitting round the table could not gainsay Pre Papiro's words, and declared them to be the truth. Then said Pre Papiro, 'To speak of a priest in Latin you must not say *Presbyter* but *Prestule*,¹ because he comes "presto, presto," to the sick man's aid. But, Pirino, I do not wish to press hard upon you on account of this first mistake; so

¹ *Prestule* (Italian), a prior, a prelate.

I will now ask you to tell me what is the Latin for a bed?' Pirino answered promptly, ' *Lectus* or *Thorus*.' When Pre Papiro heard this answer he cried out again, ' Oh, my son, you are once more mistaken! Your teacher has indeed taught you badly.' Then, turning towards Gianotto, he said, ' Gianotto, when you come back home weary from the fields, do you not say immediately after you have supped, " I would fain go and repose myself"?' To this Gianotto answered, ' Yes.' ' Therefore,' said the priest, ' a bed is called *Repositorium*.' And all those present with one voice declared that this must be the truth. But Pirino, though he was by this time beginning to make a mock of the priest, did not dare to openly contradict him, lest he should thereby offend his kins-folk who were present.

Pre Papiro, continuing his examination, went on: ' And what is the Latin for the table off which we eat our food? ' ' *Mensa*, ' replied Pirino. Then Pre Pa-

piro said, addressing the company, 'Alas, alas, with what little profit has Gianotto laid out his money, and how ill has Pirino spent his time, seeing that he knows nought of the Latin vocabulary or of the rules of grammar! I must tell you that the table at which men sit to eat is called *Gaudium*, and not *Mensa*, forasmuch as man, as long as he is at table, is in a state of joy and gladness.'¹ This explanation seemed a wise and laudable one to the company assembled, and they praised the priest highly, holding him to be a man of the deepest wit and learning. Pirino, though it went sorely against the grain, was forced to give way to Pre Papiro's ignorance, from the fact that he was restrained by the presence of his parents and kinsfolk.² When Pre Papiro remarked how he had won the approbation of all the guests, he began to strut about as proudly as any peacock,

¹ Orig., quanto l'huomo sta à tavola, sta in gaudio et allegressa.

² Orig., perche egli era da propri parenti troncata la strada.

and raising his voice, he asked in a loud tone, 'And what is the Latin for a cat, my son?' 'Felis,' answered Pirino. 'Oh, you silly gull!' cried the priest. 'Is not a cat called *Saltagraffa*, because when you hold out to it any food, it quickly leaps up and attacks it with its paws, and grips it, and then runs off.'¹ All the villagers were struck with wonder at the priest's exposition, and listened with the greatest attention to the prompt way in which Pre Papiro put his queries and gave the answers, judging him on this account to be a highly learned man.

When the priest once more began his questionings, he said to Pirino, 'Now tell me what is the Latin word for fire?' 'Ignis,' answered Pirino. 'What do you mean by *ignis*?' cried the priest, and turning towards the assembled guests afresh, he said to them, 'Brethren, when you take home the meat which you design for your dinner, what do you first

¹ Orig., *ella subito salta, e con la zatta s'attacca, graffa, e poi se ne fugge.*

do with it? Do you not cook it?' And all the listeners answered 'Yes.' 'Then,' said the priest, 'fire is not called *Ignis*, but *Carniscoculum*. And now tell me truly, Pirino, what is the Latin word for water?' '*Limpha*,' answered Pirino. 'Alas, alas!' cried Pre Papiro. 'What is this you say? A fool you went to Padua, a fool you have come back!' ¹ And then, addressing the company, he went on: 'You must know, my good brethren, that experience is the mistress of everything in the world, and that water is not called *Limpha*, but *Abundantia*, for if you should happen to go to the river to draw water, or to water your beasts, you will never find there any want of water, and for this reason it is called *Abundantia*.' By this time Gianotto was almost like a man out of his wits owing to what he had heard, and he began to lament sorely over the time lost and the money ill-spent. When

¹ A version of the proverb, "Chi bestia vad a Roma, bestia ritorna."

Pre Papiro perceived that the good peasant was thus mightily vexed, he said to Pirino, 'I will now ask you one thing more. Tell me what riches are called in Latin, and then we will have done with questioning.' '*Divitiae, Divitiarum*,' answered Pirino. 'Oh, my son,' said the priest, 'you are wrong again, and completely mistaken, for riches are called in Latin *Sustantia*, seeing that they are the sustenance of man.'

When the feast and the questionings had come to an end, Pre Papiro drew Gianotto aside and said to him: 'Gianotto, my good gossip, you must by this time see plainly enough how little good your son has got by going to Padua; therefore, if you take my advice, you will not send him back to his studies, merely to lose his time and your money. Indeed, if you act in such wise, you will surely repent it.' Gianotto, who knew nothing of the true value of Pre Papiro's words, believed them fully, and, after he had stripped Pirino of his city-made

clothes, he caused him to put on others of coarse homespun cloth, and sent him to tend the pigs. Pirino, when he found how he had been unjustly overborne by the priest's ignorance, and forced to sit silent instead of meeting him in argument (not forsooth because he was wanting in knowledge for the task, but because he was unwilling to vex his parents, who were doing him honour), was plunged in sore distress at finding himself degraded from the condition of a scholar to that of a swineherd. Moreover, he was inflamed with so great anger and fury that he determined to seek revenge for the ignominy and scorn that had been cast upon him, and in carrying out this design of his Fortune was favourable to him, forasmuch as one day, when he was leading out the pigs to pasture in front of the priest's house, he saw there a cat, which he first allured with a piece of bread and next caught with his hand. Then, having got a large bunch of flax, he tied it to her tail and set it on fire,

and then let her go. The cat, feeling something tightly bound to her tail, and the fire scorching her hinder parts, fled straightway into Pre Papiro's house, and, darting through a crevice in the wall, she ran into the chamber next to the one in which the priest lay still asleep. Maddened with terror she ran under the bed, where there was stored a great quantity of linen, and in a very short space of time the linen and the bed and the whole room was ablaze. Pirino, when he saw that Pre Papiro Schizza's house was on fire, and that there was now no possibility of extinguishing the flames, began to scream out in a loud voice, 'Prestule, prestule, get up quickly from your *reposorium*, and take care that you do not stumble over the *gaudium*, because the *saltagraffa* is coming and is bringing *carniscoculum* along with her, and unless you come to the rescue of your house with *abundantia* you will see the end of all your *sustantia*.'

Pre Papiro, who was still lying fast

asleep in bed when Pirino began his shouting, woke up and strained his ears to catch the words, but he had no notion as to what Pirino meant, because he had clean forgotten the meaning of the words he had lately employed when questioning the youth. By this time the fire was doing its work at all four corners of the house, and in a very little time Pre Papiro's own chamber would likewise be ablaze. At last, when he smelt the smoke, he got up quickly and found that his house was being burnt. Then he went straightway to try and extinguish the flames, but it was now too late, for the fire was burning fiercely on all sides, and he barely escaped from the house with his life. Thus Pre Papiro, being stripped of all his worldly goods, was left with no other cloak than his own ignorance: and Pirino, having fully avenged himself for the injuries he had received, gave over the care of his father's pigs and returned, as best he could, to Padua, where he prosecuted the studies he had

already begun to such good purpose that he became at last a man of great renown.

After Vicenza had brought her laughable fable to an end, and had been highly praised therefor by all the company, the Signora gave command that she should forthwith propound her enigma, and the damsel, although the laughter still went round, spake it in these words :

Dead to men I seem to be,
Yet surely breath there is in me;
Cruel is my fate, I trow,
Buffeted now high, now low.
But assaults of fist and heel,
Vex me not, for nought I feel.
Backwards, forwards, urged and driven,
Soaring high from earth to heaven,
Blameless I midst all my woes,
Yet find all men my bitter foes.

Vicenza, when she saw that no one of the company understood this ambiguous riddle of hers, thus in graceful and seemly fashion cut the knot : " This enigma of mine, which you have listened to with such close attention, is meant to typify

the football, which, though it is dead, has breath inside it when it is blown out. It is thrown about by the players, now here, now there, now with the hands, now with the feet, and assaulted by all as if it were their chief foe."

Fiordiana, to whom had been allotted the last turn of story-telling for the night, rose from her seat, and said in her sprightly manner: "Signora, it would give me no small delight if the Signor Ferier Beltramo would, of his kindness, do me a certain favour, on account of which I should hold myself ever bound to him." The Signor Ferier, hearing himself thus named and called upon to grant a favour, said: "Signora Fiordiana, it is your part to command, and mine to obey. Bid me therefore do whatever may please you, for I will use my best endeavour to carry out your full wishes." The damsel, when she heard this kindly answer, first thanked him heartily for his gracious consent, and then said: "I ask nothing less of you, Signor Ferier,

than that you should now take the turn of story-telling which by right belongs to me, and recount a fable in my stead.” Signor Ferier, when he heard this modest request, at first, as was always his custom, began to excuse himself, but after a little, perceiving that his own inclination and the wishes of all the company were inclined to support Fiordiana’s prayer, he threw aside all show of demur, and said: “Signora Fiordiana, to gratify your wishes and the wishes of this honourable company I am inclined to do what you ask; but, if you find that you do not get from me what you desire, and what I, on my part, wish to give you, do not blame me, who am but a feeble instrument and little versed in such accomplishments, but blame yourselves, seeing that you will have been the prime cause.” And, having thus made his excuse, he at once began his fable in these words.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

The Florentines and the Bergamasques convoke their learned men for a disputation, whereupon the Bergamasques, by a certain astute trick, outwit the Florentines their opponents.

WOULD remind you, comely ladies, that, however great may be the difference between men of wisdom and letters and men who are gross-minded and sensual, it has now and then come to pass that sages have been worsted by men of small learning. Is not indeed a clear proof of this set forth in the Holy Scriptures, where we may read how the simple and despised apostles confounded the understanding of those who were full of knowledge and wisdom? Also I will strive to set this plainly before you in this little fable of mine.

In times long past (as I have often heard tell by my grandsires, and per-

chance you may have heard the same) it happened that a number of Florentine and Bergamasque merchants were travelling together, and (as it not seldom occurs) they fell to discussing many and divers matters. Now, as they were passing from one subject to another, a certain Florentine said: 'Of a truth you Bergamasques, as far as we can judge, are mightily stupid and thick-headed, and, were it not for the little traffic in merchandise which you exercise, you would be good for nothing on account of your coarse-grained tempers. It happens indeed that Fortune allows to you a certain degree of success as merchants, but this favour of hers is assuredly not granted to you by reason of your keenness of intellect, or of any learning that you may have gotten, but rather because of your rapacity and avarice, which cause you to be very sharp-set to grasp the smallest gain. In good sooth I know no men who are more gross and ignorant than you.'

On hearing these words a certain Bergamasque came forward and said: 'Now I, for my part, maintain that we Bergamasques are worth more than you Florentines according to any reckoning you like to bring forward. For although you Florentines may be gifted with a smooth and wheedling speech, which delights more than our own dialect the ears of those who listen, still in every other respect you are a long way inferior to the men of Bergamo. If you will take the trouble to make candid observation, you will find there is no man amongst our people, whether of high or low degree, who has not contrived to acquire some knowledge of letters. Beyond this, we are all of us always ready and eager for the prosecution of any great-souled enterprise. No one can say that a disposition of this sort is commonly to be met with amongst you Florentines, except perhaps in the case of a few of you.' Hereupon there arose a great contention between one party and

the other; the Bergamasques not being willing to give way to the Florentines, nor the Florentines to the Bergamasques, each one speaking up for his own side; until at last a Bergamasque merchant arose and said: 'What is the good of all these wrangling words? Let us put the matter to the proof and make due provision for the holding of a solemn discussion, for which we will, Florentines and Bergamasques alike, let come together the very flower of our learned men, and in this wise it may be clearly demonstrated which of us holds the first place.' To this proposition the Florentines forthwith gave their assent, but after this there still remained to be settled the question whether the Florentines should go to Bergamo, or the Bergamasques to Florence; wherefore, after much discussion, they agreed to settle the question by casting lots. So, having prepared two billets and put them into a vase, they drew one out, which drawing proclaimed that the Florentines should go to Bergamo.

The day for the discussion was fixed to be the kalends of May, and, this point having been decided, the merchants went back to their respective cities and referred the whole matter to their wise and learned townsmen, who, as soon as they heard what was proposed to be done, were greatly pleased thereanent, and set to work to prepare themselves for long and subtle disputation. The Bergamasques, like the astute and crafty folk they were, began to lay plans how they might best contrive to overreach the Florentines and to leave them covered with shame and confusion ; thus, after having convoked all the learned men of the city, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, canonists, philosophers, theologians, and doctors of every other faculty, they chose out of these the men of keenest wit, and bade them keep themselves in readiness at home, in order that they might do service as the rock and fortress of the city's reputation in the forthcoming dispute with the Florentines. The rest of the

learned doctors they caused to be dressed in ragged clothes, and then bade them go out of the city and bestow themselves at different places along the road by which the Florentines must pass, directing them to accost the strangers at every opportunity, and always to speak with them in the Latin tongue. Therefore these learned men of Bergamo, having dressed themselves in coarse clothes and gone down amongst the peasants of the plain, set themselves to work at divers sorts of labour — some dug ditches, others delved the earth with pickaxe and shovel, one man doing this thing, and another that.

While the Bergamasque doctors were labouring in this fashion, so that anyone would have taken them to be mere peasants, lo and behold! the chosen Florentines came riding past in great pomp and splendour, and when they marked how there were certain men working in the fields, they cried out to them: 'God be with you, good brothers!' Whereupon

those whom they took to be peasants answered: 'Bene veniant tanti viri!' The Florentines, thinking they were making some joke, said: 'How many miles have we yet to cover before we shall come to the city of Bergamo?' And to this the Bergamasques answered: 'Decem vel circa.' When the Florentines heard this reply they said: 'Brethren, we address you in the vulgar tongue, whence comes it that you answer us in Latin?' The Bergamasques replied: 'Ne miremini, excellentissimi domini. Unusquisque enim nostrum sic, ut auditis, loquitur, quoniam majores, et sapientiores nostri sic nos docuerunt.' Having left these men behind, the Florentines, as they continued their journey, saw other peasants who were digging ditches beside the high road, and, coming to a halt, they spake to them thus: 'Ho, friends! ho, there! may God be with you!' To which greeting the Bergamasques answered: 'Et Deus vobis-
cum semper sit!' 'How far is it to

Bergamo?' inquired the Florentines; whereupon the others answered: 'Exigua vobis restat via.' And after this reply they went on from one manner of discourse to another, till at last they begun to dispute together on questions of philosophy, concerning which these Bergamasque peasants argued with such weight and subtlety that the Florentine doctors were hard pressed to answer them. Then, struck with astonishment, they said one to another, 'Of a truth it is a marvellous thing that these clownish fellows, who must spend all their time labouring at all manner of rural tasks, should be thus excellently instructed in polite letters.' Then they rode on towards a neat and well-kept hostelry, standing at no great distance from the city; but, before they had come thither, a stable varlet advanced to meet them, and invited them to alight at the inn, saying: 'Domini, libetne vobis hospitari? Hic enim vobis erit bonum hospitium.' And, for the reason that the Florentines

were already wearied from the long journey they had made, they gladly dismounted from their horses, and, when they would have gone upstairs to go and repose themselves, the innkeeper came forward and spake thus, 'Excellentissimi domini, placetne vobis ut præparetur cœna? Hic enim sunt bona vina, ova recentia, carnes, volatilia, et alia hujusmodi.' Hereupon the Florentines were filled with greater amazement than before, and knew not what to say, forasmuch as all the people with whom they had conversed spoke Latin as if they had studied it from their earliest days.

A little after this there came into the room one in the guise of a serving-maid, who was, in sooth, a certain nun, a woman of great knowledge and learning. She had been well instructed as to how she should bear herself at this juncture; wherefore she addressed them saying: 'Indigentne dominationes vestrae re aliqua? Placet, ut sternentur lectuli, ut requiem capiatis?' The Florentines were

utterly overcome with astonishment at these words of the serving-woman, and straightway began to talk with her, and she, after she had discoursed on many matters, using always the Latin tongue, brought forward for debate the subject of theology, and spake thereanent with such universal knowledge that every one of those who heard her was constrained to give her the highest praise. While she was thus holding dispute with the Florentine doctors there entered one dressed as a furnace-man, and swart with coal dust, and he, hearing the discussion which was going on between the serving-maid and the strangers, contrived to interpose a speech of his own, and put forth an interpretation of the Holy Scriptures so learned and erudite that all the Florentine doctors declared that they had never before listened to any discourse which excelled it.

When this controversy had come to an end the Florentines withdrew to get some rest, and the next day they took counsel

amongst themselves whether they should return to Florence at once or go on to Bergamo. After much wrangling they came to the decision that it would be wiser to go back straightway. 'For,' said they, 'if such deep learning is found amongst field-labourers and innkeepers, and male and female servants, what must we expect to meet in the city itself, where men are always more accomplished than in the country, and given to nought else than the prosecution of learning from one year's end to another?' As soon as they had come to this decision, without hesitating further, and without having ever seen the walls of the city of Bergamo, they mounted their horses and rode back to Florence. In this wise the Bergamasques, on account of this wily stratagem of theirs, contrived to outwit the Florentines, and ever since that time the Bergamasques have enjoyed a privilege, granted to them by the emperor, to travel securely in all parts of the world without hindrance.

As Signor Ferier brought his story to an end, all the listeners laughed heartily, praising the astuteness of the Bergamasques, and casting blame and contempt on the cowardice of the Florrentines. But because the Signora imagined that such discussion must needs redound to the dishonour of the Florentine doctors, for whom she had no small regard, she gave command that everyone should be silent, and that Signor Ferier should go on with his enigma. But he, turning towards Fiordiana, said, 'Signora, you have laid upon me the burden of telling a fable which can have given but small pleasure to any of the listeners, so it would be only right and just that you should take upon yourself the task of setting an enigma. Do not, I pray thee, ask of me any such undertaking, seeing that I am no way practised or expert therein.' Fiordiana, who never lacked courage, spake boldly thus: "Signor Ferier, I will not refuse this duty, and at the same time I will thank you

very heartily for all you have done for me." And then, with a merry face, she set forth the enigma :

I know not why, unfortunate,
I meet with such an evil fate,
That, though a valiant male I'm born,
Into a female all forlorn
I soon am turned. To work this change
Men fall on me with working strange.
With grievous heavy blows I'm wrought,
And made almost a thing of nought ;
And next, a lot more painful yet,
In burning fiery furnace set,
To cruel men a boon to give.
And thus I die that they may live.

Because the hour was now late, and the grasshoppers had ceased their screeching, and the brightness of the dawn was beginning to shine in the east, the Signora gave the word that Fiordiana should forthwith tell the meaning of her riddle, and that after this everyone should go home, but not omit to return on the following evening, according to the established use. Whereupon the damsel

in graceful and pleasing style thus cut the knot of her ambiguous enigma: “The enigma I lately gave you to guess in sooth means nothing else than wheaten corn, the name of which is of the masculine gender, but after it has been ground it changes its style and becomes feminine, to wit, flour. Then, after sore beating, it is made into dough, and finally is baked by fire to serve for the nutriment of man.”

Then after all the company had warmly praised the solution given by Fiordiana, they rose from their seats, and having taken leave of the Signora, they went their several ways with eyes heavy with sleep.¹

¹ In the edition of 1556 the Ninth Night ends with this fable.

THE SIXTH FABLE.¹

A certain priest being enamoured of the wife of an image-carver, goes to her house, where a grave mischance befalls him.

TFor all our churchmen (I am speaking of unworthy and not of worthy clerks) were zealous after learning, thus giving an example to the lewd, and disposed to live in godly wise according to their rules, the ignorant rabble would have less occasion to rail at them and to pretend to teach them their duties. On the other hand, all men would then hold the priest in high reverence, and account themselves favoured by God if they should only touch the hem of a cassock. It is because our spiritual guides have taken the manners of secular folk, giving themselves up to the world in luxury and

¹ From the French of Pierre de la Rivey. See Notes, Night IX., Fable VI.

lasciviousness, doing things such as they would never suffer us to do, and holding in no reverence the state to which they have been called, that one hears evil report of them everywhere, both in public and in private. For this reason I have no scruple in telling you the story of a peccant clerk, which, though you may find it somewhat long, may prove both a pleasant diversion and a profitable lesson.

In the fair city of Florence there lived at one time a clerk named Messer Tiberio. To what order he belonged I cannot now undertake to say, as my memory has failed me. Suffice it to remark that he was a man well versed in letters, an eloquent preacher, subtle in argument, and standing well with everybody; but, for some reason to me unknown, he had cast off his monk's habit to become a secular. Nevertheless, though he had thrown his cowl into the nettle-bed, and, on this account, was not in such high esteem as heretofore, he still

enjoyed the consideration of many persons of worship, and of the city as a whole.

It chanced one day—for Messer Tiberio had good repute as a confessor—that a pretty young woman called Prudence, a name which went well with her character, presented herself to lay bare her offences. She was wife to one Quinquino, a carver of images and the first craftsman of the day. This lady being on her knees before Tiberio, said to him: ‘Sir, my confessor, to whom I have hitherto gone, is dead, and having heard the report of your holiness and virtuous life, I have chosen to come to you, in his place, as my spiritual director.’

Messer Tiberio, seeing that she was fair and fresh as a bud with the dew upon it, graceful and well made, and in the flower of her youth, fell so hotly in love with her that he scarce knew what he said or did, being carried away by the very sight of her beauty. When he

came to deal with the sin of luxury he asked her, 'And now, my daughter, have you ever felt particular affection or preference for any priest or religious person?' She, quite unsuspecting of a trick, and recking nothing of whither he was bent on leading her, replied, 'Yes, surely. For my late confessor I felt all the love that a daughter has for a good father, and honoured and revered him as was his due.' After this reply Tiberio plied her with such subtle speech that he contrived to learn what was her name, and her condition, and the place where she abode. This done, he commended himself to her, and besought her to hold him as dear as her late director, and, as a sign of his well-wishing, he promised at the next Easter to visit her and give her spiritual consolation. For this grace she thanked him, and, having received absolution, went her way. When she was gone, Messer Tiberio's brain was well-nigh turned as he called up the fair image of his late penitent, and, wrapping him-

self up in his cloak of furs, he schemed how he might best win her favours; but the affair ran to an issue other than that which he had figured, so much easier is it to frame your design than to fill it in with colours. After Easter Tiberio did not forget to walk frequently before the house of Prudence, to whom, as often as he saw her, he made a courteous salutation, ogling her out of the corner of his eye; but she, like a modest woman, looked down and feigned not to see him. So instant was he, with his comings and goings and salutations, that Prudence began to fear lest his attentions should beget evil report; to prevent which she was careful to let herself be seen by him no more—a measure which gave no small chagrin to the priest, who was by this time so violently enamoured of her that he felt there was no escape from his thraldom save through the kindness of Signora Prudence. He sent to her a young clerk to beg her to suffer him to visit her as her ghostly adviser; but the

clerk could get no reply to take back to Tiberio, who at once set her down as prudent and careful to keep her own counsel. However, it is well known that one must often knock more than once at a door before it opens, and that a strong place need never surrender unless it be valiantly assaulted; so the priest resolved not to give over his essay, and every day he sent some fresh messenger to glean tidings of the lady. Prudence, noting the resolute humour of the priest, was much disturbed thereat; wherefore, at last, she felt constrained to speak to her husband, saying: 'Quinquino, for some time past Messer Tiberio, my confessor, has sent divers messengers to me, and whenever he meets me he gives me salutation, and, more than that, he pursues me, making the while I know not what fanciful speeches, which confuse me sorely. For this reason I have resolved to go no more where he can see me—a step I was unwilling to take without first letting you know.' 'And what

reply have you given him?' said the husband. 'I have given none,' Prudence answered. 'You did well and very wisely,' said Quinquino; 'but I would counsel you, in case he should salute you again, or say any word to you, that you should give him in reply, as soberly and as discreetly as possible, some speech which may seem to you meet for the occasion. Then we may watch what the issue may be.' To this proposition Prudence freely assented.

Before many days had passed it chanced that Quinquino was called away after dinner on his affairs to another part of the city, and Prudence was left to take care of the house. Very soon Tiberio appeared, and, having observed that she was by herself, took off his hat with profound obeisance, and said, 'Good day, Signora,' and to this Prudence answered graciously, 'A good day and a happy year to you.' The priest, marking that she returned his salute, a good fortune which had never hitherto happened to

him, imagined that her heart was softened, and that, her pity being aroused, she would now look kindly upon him. Encouraged by her voice, he entered the shop, where he remained more than an hour, setting before her ardently the object of his desire. At last, fearing lest Quinquino should return, he took his leave, begging Prudence to hold him in her good graces, and swearing to remain her devoted servant. For which she thanked him modestly, promising to hold in mind his request.

Soon after the priest was gone Quinquino came back, and Prudence told him all that had passed. 'You have done very well,' he said; 'and the next time he comes you can beguile him with any favour which may be seemly and honest.' This she agreed to, and Messer Tiberio having whetted his appetite by the sight of the lady, began to prepare the next step by sending her divers presents, all of which she vouchsafed to accept, thus kindling in him the belief

that if once he should get fair speech with her the prize would be won. He found her once more alone, and besought her with soft and winning words to give him her favour, without which he would surely die. To which she replied : ' Signor, I would willingly grant your wish, which indeed is my wish as well, did I not dread my husband's wrath, and to lose, it may be, both my life and my honour at the same time.' These words so powerfully affected Tiberio that he was like to die of grief; but, having recollected his wits, he besought her not to let him perish when she had it in her power to save him. Then Prudence, feigning to be touched in the heart, feigning also to yield to his prayer, accorded to him an assignation for that same night, her husband having gone into the country to buy wood. The priest, overjoyed at his success, departed in high glee.

When Quinquino returned Prudence told him exactly what she had done, and

then he said to her, 'We must do more than this, and play him such a trick as will put an end to all his fancies, and keep him from ever annoying you again. Go and make the bed, and lock up every place except the chest, and clear away any lumber which may be lying on the presses. I will lie in wait, to be ready to send him about his business, as I will tell you.' Then he set forth to her the snare he had planned, and Prudence, having grasped her husband's intent, promised to carry it out.

To the priest this day seemed to be six years long. It was as if the night, which was to bring him into the arms of his love, would never come. He went to the market and bought good store of delicate meats, which he sent to Prudence, begging her to let them be cooked, and assuring her that he would not fail to sup with her at the appointed hour.

Prudence, as soon as the provisions arrived, began to bustle about in the

kitchen, and Quinquino having hidden himself, they awaited the coming of Tiberio, who, as soon as he entered, hastened to give Prudence a kiss while she was busied over the cooking of the supper, but she drew back, saying, 'Signor, as you have had so much patience, have a little more; for it is hardly fit that you should touch me, black and dirty as I am.' With these words she shifted and turned now one pot and now another, contriving to keep Messer Tiberio at a distance. Meantime Quinquino, on the watch, had taken his stand in a secret passage, from whence he could see and hear all that passed, a little in dread, mayhap, lest the trick might be played at his own cost. At this point of the affair Prudence, as she dawdled now over this and now over that, sorely taxed the patience of the poor priest, who, to make greater despatch, tried his hand at the pastry, wishing to figure as a cook himself; but this caused the lady to loiter all the more. Tiberio, fearing lest

all the time should be taken up with these preparations, and none be left for the purpose on account of which he had come, said: ‘Signora, so great is my desire to hold you in my arms that it has taken away all my appetite for food and drink, therefore I have decided to go without my supper;’ and with these words he stripped and got into bed. Then Prudence, laughing secretly at the ridiculous figure he made, replied: ‘What foolishness to turn your back on all these delicate meats. I can tell you, if you are simple enough to forego them, the loss will be all your own, for I am not going to bed without my supper.’ All this time she was busy with her cookery, and the more the priest besought her to get into bed, the more there seemed to be done outside it. At last, seeing that he was worn out with impatience, she said, to keep him quiet: ‘But one thing is certain, I will never go to bed with a man who sleeps in his shirt; therefore, if you want to have

your will with me, you must take it off, and then you will see I shall be ready to do what you want. Messer Tiberio, deeming this request to be but a trifling one, took off his shirt, and lay there as naked as when he came from his mother's womb. Prudence, seeing that he was ready to follow whither she would lead him, gathered up his shirt and all his other clothes and put them in a chest and turned the key. Then, though she made a great show of washing and perfuming herself, and getting ready for bed, she did little else but bustle about the room, till the poor wight between the sheets was half mad with impatience. Quinquino, who had espied through a crevice all that had passed, now saw that it was time for him to come upon the scene; so he went out by the back door, and, having come round to the front, knocked loudly thereat. Prudence, hearing her husband at the knocker, made as if she were beside herself with fear, and, trembling all over, she cried, 'Alas!

what will become of me? for it is my husband who is without. I know his knock too well. Wretch that I am! What shall we do so that he may not see you?' Then said Tiberio: 'Bad luck indeed; but quick, give me my clothes. I will put them on and hide under the bed.' 'Put on your clothes, indeed,' cried Prudence. 'What time will you find to do this? No. I see another plan. Get up quick on the top of this dresser, and stand close against that cross there, with your feet crossed and your arms stretched out after the fashion of a crucifix, and then I am sure my husband, when he comes in and sees you in such a posture, will take you for some crucifix upon which he has recently been at work.' All the while Quinquino was knocking lustily without and calling; and Messer Tiberio, in a dead fright lest he should be discovered in the bed, mounted the dresser, where he stationed himself quite still against the cross with his arms stretched out. Prudence then

went down and opened the door to her husband, who rated her soundly for keeping him cooling his heels so long outside. When he entered the chamber he gave no sign of being aware of Tiberio's presence, but sat down to supper with his wife, and, this despatched, they undressed and went to bed.

What tortures poor Tiberio must have suffered, I leave to the imagination of those who may have writhed under the pricks of amorous desire, thus to see the husband gorging himself with the banquet which he had so carefully devised for his own delectation, only to find himself overwhelmed with shame and injury.

At last the morning began to dawn, and little by little the chamber grew light. Then Quinquino rose from his bed, and, having dressed himself, set to work at his carving; but he had scarce begun when two nuns from a neighbouring convent came to the house, and, having entered, thus spake to him:

‘Master Quinquino, our abbess desires that you will send home at once the crucifix which several days ago she ordered of you.’ ‘My sisters,’ Quinquino replied, ‘will you say to the abbess that the crucifix is begun, but not yet finished. In two days’ time, however, she shall have it.’ ‘But she told us to say,’ replied the nuns, ‘that, finished or not, she wishes it to be sent home, for you have kept her waiting too long.’ Quinquino, feigning to be wroth at the persistence of the nuns, answered angrily, ‘Now please to come in and see if I have not taken heed of your commandment, and whether the crucifix, as it is, is one which would suit the fancy of your abbess.’ And when the nuns had entered he went on with his speech, pointing towards Tiberio, ‘Look up there over the dresser, and see whether you would like to have that crucifix just as it is, and whether you think the abbess would be satisfied with it.’ The nuns, when they had closely scanned the

woebegone figure he pointed out to them, exclaimed: 'Indeed, the abbess would be hard to please were she not content therewith, seeing that you have counterfeited nature so well that your work seems like so much flesh and blood; of a truth it only wants speech. But there are parts of it which might perchance give offence; for you have carved, too much in the semblance of nature, something which might breed a riot in a convent of women.' 'No need to let that trouble you,' said Quinquino, 'I will give it the finishing stroke in a moment. Would to God I could cure a man of mortal sickness as easily as I can cure this fault!' And snatching up one of his sharpest tools, he said, 'Just watch and see how quickly I will rid it of everything that might offend the abbess and the other sisters;' and as he spoke he made for Tiberio as if to carry out his threat. The priest, who up to this moment had kept as still as if he were dead, no sooner saw the tool which

Quinquino had taken up than he sprang down from his place without a word, and, naked as he was, took to flight, as if a red-hot poker were behind him, with Quinquino in pursuit. Prudence, fearing lest some scandal should get abroad, caught hold of her husband and held him back; so that poor Tiberio was able to make his way out of the house. Then the two nuns, who had been standing open-mouthed at these strange doings, ran out also, and began to cry along the streets: 'A miracle, a miracle! the crucifix has come to life and run away.' And when they heard such clamour all the loiterers flocked around to see what was happening, and then fell to laughing hugely when they heard what the business really was. But poor Tiberio, when he had put on some garments, fled the city, and whither he be-took himself I cannot tell. I only know that never again was he seen in Florence.

The whole company laughed at the notion of the poor priest, compelled to



The Country Comes To Life

Painting by John Marin

1920-1930



The Crucifix Comes To Life

Night the Ninth

SIXTH FABLE





spend the whole night feigning to be a crucifix, and not daring to cough even, though he might have a hundred pounds of feathers tickling his throat, and they were still more diverted to figure him flying at full speed to save what he could not afford to lose, and the nuns crying out that a miracle had come to pass, and that the crucifix had run away. So loud and long was the merriment over this that the Signora had to clap her hands to restore silence, and, this being done, she directed Vicenza to give her enigma, which was as follows :

Fresh and rosy from your birth,
Honour of heaven and crown of earth,
Strong you are for good or ill ;
The round world with your fame you fill.
Should you plead the cause of right,
Then darkness flies before the light ;
But if evil be your view,
Rack and ruin dire ensue.
The massy globe of sea and land
Your hostile touch shall not withstand.¹

¹ Straparola has used this enigma in the Sixth Fable of Night VIII.

“ My enigma,” said Vicenza, “ signifies nothing else than the tongue, in its good or evil humour. It is red, as we all know, and it is a glorious work of heaven when with it we praise God, and thank Him for all the benefits He has given us, and it is in like manner the glory of the world when it impels men to do good. So, when by its words it shows that it has given itself to evil, it spreads headlong ruin all around, and of this I could give you many examples if I did not see that the hour grows late.” And with these words Vicenza sat down.

The End of the Ninth Night.



Right the Tenth.



Night the Tenth.

READY on all sides the beasts of the field, wearied by the fatigues of the day, were seeking to give repose to their tired limbs, some resting upon soft feathers, some upon the hard and sharp-pointed rocks, some upon the swart herbage, and some amidst the thick-leaved trees, when the Signora, with the damsels who attended her, came forth from their chamber and went into the hall of meeting, where was gathered together the company, ready to listen to the fables which were to be told. Having called one of the servants, the Signora directed him to bring the golden vase, and, after they had put therein the names of five of the damsels, the drawing began, and the first name to be

drawn forth was that of Lauretta, the second that of Arianna, the third that of Alteria, the fourth that of Eritrea, and the fifth that of Cateruzza. But before the beginning of the story-telling, the Signora signified it to be her will that they should first dance a measure, and then that Bembo should sing them a canzonet, and he, being unable to provide himself with any sufficient excuse, began to sing in a sweet voice, while all the company sat listening in silence.

SONG.

Love's ardour or love's chills I feel no more,
No more they make me fain
To ply you with my prayers in hope to gain
The last, the sweetest boon you hold in store.
My spirit quails with fear,
As to that hateful bourne I draw anear,
The bourne by mortals shunned in vain.
And is this fruit the sweetest I shall find,
Enclosed within love's bitter rind ?
Shall I, when ended is my life,
No solace find
For all my weary days of strife ?
Shall there be granted me no rest benign
Till I my tristful life for kindly death resign ?

This sweet song of Bembo's delighted all the listeners greatly, and, as soon as it had come to an end, Lauretta, rising from her seat, began her fable in the following words.

THE FIRST FABLE.

Finetta steals from Madonna Veronica, the wife of Messer Brocardo di Caballi, a gentleman of Verona, a necklace, a string of pearls, and other jewels; which, by the aid of a certain lover of hers, Veronica recovers without letting her loss come to her husband's ears.

N such times as I have employed myself in considering and reconsidering the cares and perplexities which, day by day, Fortune sends for the tormenting of wretched mortals, I have often come to the conclusion that no sufferings or sorrows can match those of a woman who loyally loves her husband, and is at the same time, without any just cause, despised and spurned by him. And on this

account we ought not to be in any way astonished if at times women, unhappy and miserable as those I have spoken of, should put forth all their strength to find some remedy for their unhappy lot. If, perchance, these ill-fated ones should now and then inadvertently fall into some error, let not their husbands lay the blame on their wives, but on themselves, seeing that they are in truth the primary cause of any misfortune and shame which may overtake them. A fate like this, in sooth, might easily have befallen a certain gracious lady of whom I now intend to speak, but she was prudent and wise, and by her virtue and strength brake in pieces the arrows of unlawful love, keeping unharmed both her own honour and that of her husband.

In Verona, a noble and ancient city, there lived in times now long past Messer Brocardo di Cavalli, a man of great wealth, and highly reputed. This gentleman, being unmarried, took for his wife a daughter of Messer Can della Scala,

Veronica by name, who, although she was very beautiful, graceful, and modest, did not win her husband's love, for he (as it not seldom happens) entertained a woman as his mistress, who was the delight of his heart, and took no thought of his wife. Wherefore Madonna Veronica grieved sorely, for she could not endure to think that her rare beauty, which won the praises of all else, should be thus despised and rejected by her husband. It chanced that this fair lady, having gone into the country during the heats of summer, was walking all alone one day before the door of her house, sedulously debating within herself the conduct and the habits and the practices of her husband, and considering how little was the love he bore her, and how a lewd and vile strumpet, unclean and filthy, had so easily dazzled the eyes of his understanding that he saw no more clearly than a blind man. And while she was thus lamenting within herself, she said: 'Oh! how much better had

it been for me if my father had given me in marriage to a poor man, than to this one who is so wealthy ; for then I should have passed my days in greater pleasure and content than I do now. Of what good to me are all these riches ? What profits it me that I go clad in sumptuous raiment, that I am decked with gems and necklaces and pendants and other precious jewels ? Of a truth all such things as these are as mere vapour compared with the delights which a happy wife may enjoy with her husband.'

While the Signora Veronica was thus letting her mind dwell on these injurious thoughts, there came suddenly across her path a beggar woman, whose real trade it was to steal whatever she could find ; moreover, she was so wily and cunning that she could easily have cozened, not merely a lady as distraught as Signora Veronica was, but any grave and prudent man she might have met. This woman, whose name was Finetta, no sooner saw

the gentle lady absorbed in deep thought walking up and down in front of her house, than she began to weave a plot against her, and, having approached her, she saluted her respectfully and begged alms of her. The lady, who was thinking of other matters than almsgiving, repulsed her with an angry look, but the wily and thievish Finetta was in no wise disposed to go away, and, peering earnestly into the lady's face, and observing how sad and sorrowful was the look thereon, she said: 'O! gentle lady, what ill can have befallen you that you look so full of care? Can it be that your husband leads you an ill life? Will it please you that I shall tell you your fortune?' The lady, as soon as she heard these words, imagined that this common vagrant woman had discovered the wound which was tormenting her so cruelly, wherefore she began to weep bitterly, for it seemed to her as if she saw her husband lying dead before her eyes. Finetta, when she marked the

scalding tears and the heartfelt sighs and the agonized sobs and the bitter lamentations of the lady, said: 'What can be the cause of this piteous grief of yours, gracious madonna?' To this the lady answered: 'When you said that perchance my husband led me an ill life, you then laid bare my heart as with a knife.' Finetta answered: 'Gentle lady, I need but to look a person narrowly in the face to tell exactly what her life may have been. Your wound, in sooth, is recent and fresh, and on this account can be healed without difficulty, but if it were of long standing and festered, it would be much harder to cure.'

The lady, when she heard the woman discourse in this wise, told her everything about the practices of her husband, and of the wicked life he led, and the evil treatment he gave her, failing to disclose nought of his doings, but telling everything to the beggar woman most minutely. When Finetta had listened to the whole of this pitiful story, she

perceived that her own plans were in the way to come to an issue exactly according to her wishes, or even beyond them, and she said: 'Dear madonna, do not grieve any more, only keep steadfast and be of good cheer, and we will soon find a remedy for your trouble. I, whensoever it may please you, will devise for you a method by which you may win the ardent love of your husband, and cause him to follow you up like a man possessed.' While they were thus talking together they went into the chamber where Madonna Veronica was wont to sleep with her husband, and, after they had both seated themselves, Finetta said: 'Madonna, if it should be your pleasure that we now set to work about this matter, I will ask you to send all the maids and servants forthwith out of this room to occupy themselves in the services of the house; then we can remain by ourselves here and do everything that is necessary for your case.'

After the servants had been dismissed

from the room and the door thereof closed, Finetta said: 'Now bring to me the most beautiful of your golden necklaces, together with a string of pearls.' Whereupon Madonna Veronica opened one of her caskets and took therefrom a necklace with a fine pendant, and a string of oriental pearls, and handed the same over to Finetta. The woman, as soon as she had taken the jewels in her hand, asked for a cloth of white linen, and this Madonna Veronica at once handed to her. Then, having taken up all the jewels one by one, she made certain signs over them, according to the fashion such women use, and put them separately into the white cloth. Next, in the presence of Madonna Veronica, she tied up the cloth with the jewels therein tightly in a knot, and muttered over it certain secret spells, and made signs with her hands. Then, handing over the cloth to Madonna Veronica, she said to her: 'Madonna, take this cloth, and with your own hands place it

under the pillow upon which your husband sleeps. Having done this, you will see that a wonderful thing will come to pass; but be careful that you do not open the cloth until to-morrow, because, if you do this thing, all the jewels will dissolve and disappear in smoke.' Madonna Veronica, having taken the cloth with the jewels tied up therein and placed it under the pillow whereupon Messer Brocardo was wont to sleep, Finetta said to her: 'Let us now go at once down into the wine cellar.' And thither they went accordingly.

As soon as they entered the cellar, the crafty Finetta's eye fell upon a wine butt which had been broached, whereupon she said, 'Madonna, you must now take off all the clothes that you have on you.' And the lady stripped herself, and stood as naked as when she was born. This done, Finetta drew out the tap from the wine butt, which was full of good wine, and said: 'Madonna, put your finger into this hole and keep

it well closed, in order that the wine may not run out, and be sure that you move not from this place till I shall have come back to you, because I must now betake myself to a place outside, and there make certain mystic signs. Then all our work will be accomplished.' The lady, who put full faith in everything Finetta said, stood there, all naked as she was, and moved not, still keeping her finger in the hole of the cask, and while she thus remained without moving the wanton Finetta went straightway into the chamber where had been left the jewels tied up in the cloth, and having untied this she took out the necklace and the pearls, and in place of these she filled the cloth with pebbles and with earth. Then, after she had knotted it up again securely, she put it back in the same place, and straightway took to flight.

The lady, standing stark naked with her finger thrust into the bunghole of the cask, waited until Finetta should return, but when, after some time had



it well closed, in order that the wine may not run out, and be sure that you move not from this place till I shall have come back to you, because I must now betake myself to a place outside, and there make certain mystic signs. Then all our work will be accomplished."

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Madonna Veronica With Her Finger In The Bung-Hole
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The lady, standing stark naked with her finger thrust into the bung-hole of the cask, waited until Finetta should return, but when, after some time had

FIRST FABLE



passed, she found that the woman did not come back, and that the hour was now growing very late, she was seized with fear lest her husband should come and find her standing naked there in this wise, and should take her for a mad woman. Therefore, having found the tap, which lay by her side, she stopped the hole of the butt therewith, and put on her clothes and went up out of the cellar. A little time after this it happened that Messer Brocardo, the husband of Madonna Veronica, returned to his house and saluted her with a good-humoured face, saying: 'Well met, indeed, my dear wife, comfort and solace of my heart!' The wife, when she heard this salute of a sort so strange to her and almost unnatural, stood as one confounded, and in her heart thanked God that He had sent this beggar woman to her, by whose aid she had found a remedy for her most weighty grief. And all through that day, and the following night as well, she remained in loving

dalliance with her husband, exchanging sweet kisses as if they were newly-married folk. Madonna Veronica, full of joy and merriment on account of the endearments which her husband had bestowed on her, told him the whole story of the passion and the torment which she had suffered on account of her love for him, and he on his part promised to treat her ever afterwards as his beloved wife, and that the misunderstanding of the past should never trouble them again.

When the next morning was come, and when her husband had arisen from the bed to go a-hunting, after the fashion of gentlemen of high estate, Madonna Veronica went at once to the bed, and having lifted up the pillow, took hold of the linen cloth in which the jewels had been placed, and untied it, expecting to find therein the necklet and the pearls, but she found it full of pebbles instead. The wretched woman, when she perceived this, was utterly confounded, and

knew not at all what course she should take, because in sooth she feared that her husband would kill her were she to make known this loss to him. While, therefore, the poor lady was tormented with this fresh sorrow, and was turning over in her mind now this thing and now that, without being able to decide in what wise she might contrive to get back her beloved jewels, she at last determined, as an honest woman might, to enlist the services of a certain gentleman who for a long time had courted her with longing looks. This same was a certain cavalier of Verona, a gentleman of fine presence, of haughty spirit, famous for his prowess, and of honourable descent. He, like all others who are mastered by the passion of love, was so cruelly tortured by the flame which consumed him on account of Madonna Veronica, that he could get no rest at all ; indeed, for love of her he spent much time in jousting, and in all other kinds of martial exercises, and gave rich feasts and gallant-

ries, thus making gay the whole city. But Madonna Veronica, who had entirely given her love to her husband, took little heed either of him or of his pompous displays, on account of which neglect the cavalier felt the greatest grief and sorrow that a lover ever knew.

Now as soon as Madonna Veronica's husband had left the house, she went to the window and espied, passing in the street, this same cavalier who was so deeply enamoured of her, whereupon she called to him, and thus cautiously addressed him: 'Good sir, you have told me full often of the burning and passionate love which you have always borne towards me, and still bear. I know that I, for my part, must often have seemed hard and cruel to you; but this humour of mine has not come of any lack of love for you, but of my firm determination to keep my honour intact, which thing I have placed before all else. Do not for this reason be aston-

ished or offended that I have not at once given assent to your ardent wishes, for the sense of honour which keeps chaste the wife of a dissolute husband is something to be greatly commended and held dear. Although you have wrongly judged me to be hard and cruel and heartless towards you, I will not on that account refuse now to have recourse to you, with all faith and confidence, as to the fountain of my salvation. If you, as a devoted friend, will lend me succour in this my great trouble, and give me your ready assistance, you may for the future always hold me as one bound to you, and may dispose of me as if I belonged to you.' When she had finished her speech she described to him exactly the whole of her misfortune, and the cavalier, after he had listened to the words of his dearly beloved lady, first of all thanked her that she had so graciously deigned to lay these commands upon him, and then gave her his promise that he would not fail in his aid, lamenting

at the same time the mischance that had befallen her.

Hereupon the cavalier departed secretly, and, having mounted his horse in the company of four trusty comrades, went in pursuit of the woman who had taken flight with the jewels, and before evening had come he overtook her at a ferry which she was about to pass over. Then, having recognized her by the description which had been given of her, he seized her by the hair of the head and made her confess everything. With the recovered jewels in his possession he returned to Verona full of joy, and when he found a fitting opportunity he restored them to Madonna Veronica. And thus, without allowing her husband to become privy to her doings, she retained her honour without any spot upon her good name.

As soon as Lauretta had brought her fable to an end, the Signora made a sign that she should let her enigma follow at once. Whereupon the damsel, without further delay, gave it in these words :

Fair and lovely is my face,
Decked with every artful grace ;
With dames and maidens I abide,
And day and night am by their side.
A trusty friend I am alway,
For dust and heat I drive away ;
But, though I win them ease and joy,
I murmur at my base employ.
Forsooth, no path to honour lies
In flouting gnats and wasps and flies !

This enigma was forthwith interpreted by the greater part, if not all of the listeners, to mean the fan which ladies carry in their hands. Then, so as to preserve the accustomed order, the Signora bade Arianna to begin her fable. and she at once spake thus.

THE SECOND FABLE.

An ass escapes from his master, the miller, and comes by chance to a certain mountain, where he meets a lion, who asks of him what his name may be, whereupon the ass, by way of answer, inquires of the lion his name. The latter replies that he is the lion, while the ass proclaims that his name is Brancaleone,¹ and, having been challenged by the lion to give proof of his valour, carries off in the end the honours of the contest.



HE diversity of human affairs, the vicissitudes of time, the manner of life of evil-minded men, oftentimes bring it to pass that what is beautiful seems to be ugly, and that what is ugly seems to be beautiful. On this account, if it should happen that in this fable which I propose now to relate to you there should be found aught in any way offensive to your ears, I beg that you will give me your

¹ *i.e.*, the clawed lion.

pardon, reserving for some other occasion any punishment which you may consider to be my due.

In Arcadia, a region of the Morea which gets its name from Arcadius, the son of Jove, a land in which was first discovered the rustic woodland shepherd's pipe, there dwelt in times now long past a certain miller, a brutal and cruel fellow, and one so irascible by nature that it needed but very little provocation to produce in him a violent access of rage.¹ This man was the owner of an ass with long ears and down-drooping lips, who, whenever he raised his voice, would make the whole plain re-echo with the sound of his braying. This poor ass, on account of the niggardly provender he got from the miller, both in eating and in drinking, was no longer able to undergo the hard work of the fields, or to endure the cruel beatings with the stick which his barbarous master was for ever inflicting upon him. Wherefore the wretched

¹ Orig., *che poche legna accendevano il suo fuoco.*

animal presented such a picture of lean and wasted misery that one could see nothing but his hide stretched over his miserable bones. One day it happened that the poor ass, exasperated beyond endurance by the many and heavy blows which were rained upon him every day by his cruel master, and by the scant supply of food he received, took flight from the miller, and went off, bearing his pack-saddle still on his back.

The wretched beast travelled a long way on the road, and when he was almost worn out with hunger and fatigue he came to the foot of a very delightful mountain, which had little about it that was savage or wild, but seemed more like a fair and cultivated domain. The ass, remarking how green and beautiful it was, determined to ascend this mountain and to spend there all the rest of his life. Whilst he was deliberating over this question, he cast his eyes round about on all sides to make sure that he might not be observed of anybody, and, not seeing any-

one round about who was likely to trouble him, he courageously mounted the hill, and with the greatest delight and pleasure began to take his fill of the sweet herbage which grew there, at the same time thanking God who had delivered him from the hands of that wicked and cruel tyrant his master, and had guided him to this place, where was to be found such abundant and excellent food for the sustenance of his wretched life. Whilst our good ass was thus living upon the mountain, feeding every day upon tender and fine grass, and having all the while his pack-saddle upon his back, lo and behold! a savage lion issued from a dark cave and saw the ass. Having looked at him for some time very attentively, he was mightily astonished that this beast should have been arrogant enough to dare to come up upon this mountain without his licence and knowledge. And for the reason that the lion had never before beheld an animal of this sort, he was afraid to go near him, and the ass,

when he saw the lion, felt every hair on his body bristle and stand on end. Because of the sudden fear that seized him, he left off eating straightway, and did not dare to stir from the place where he stood feeding.

The lion, having plucked up a little courage, came forward and said to the donkey, 'What is it that you do here, my good friend? Who gave you leave to mount into these parts? And who may you be?' To these questions the ass, with rising pride and with arrogant spirit, said, 'And who may you be yourself who venture to ask me who I am?' The lion, greatly amazed at hearing this retort, answered, 'I am the king of all the animals.' 'And what may your name be?' inquired the ass. The other answered, 'Lion is my name. But you, what do men call you?' At these words the ass, putting on a still more braggart air, said, 'And I am called Brancaleone.' When the lion heard this speech, he said to himself, 'By his name, in truth, this

animal before me may well be more powerful than I am myself.' Then he said to the ass : 'Ser Brancaleone, both your name and your manner of speech show to me clearly that you are more puissant and stronger withal than I am. But nevertheless it would please me greatly that we two should make certain trials of our prowess, one against the other.' At these words the valour of the ass increased mightily, and, having turned his hinder parts towards the lion, said : 'Do you see this pack-saddle, and the piece of artillery I carry under my tail. Be sure if I were to give you a sample of its powers you would straightway die with fright.' And as he spake thus he gave a couple of kicks high in the air and at the same time let off divers crackers which were so loud that they set the lion's brain in a whirl. The latter, when he heard the resounding noise of the donkey's kicks, and of the cracking bombardment of his field-piece, fell in sooth into a fit of terror, and, because by this

time evening was drawing near, he said to the ass: 'Good brother, it is in no wise my will that there should be any bandying of words between us, or that we should kill one another, seeing that there is in this world nothing that is worse than death. I would counsel, however, that we should both of us lay ourselves down to rest, and when the morrow shall have come we will meet, and then and there we will thrice make trial of our strength and prowess. Whoever of us two shall prove himself to be the worthier in these encounters shall remain the supreme lord and master of this mountain.' And so they agreed that it should be.

When the morning of the next day had come and the two competitors were duly met together, the lion, who desired especially to witness some proof or other of skill, said: 'Brancaleone, I am in sooth become filled with the warmest regard for you, and I shall know no rest until such time as I shall have seen

some wondrous deed wrought by you.' Whereupon they set out on their way, and as they journeyed together they came to a certain gorge of the mountain, very wide and deep. Then said the lion: 'Good comrade, the time is now come when we may see which one of us can best leap over this gorge.' The lion, who was very strong and active, no sooner went up to the gorge than he found himself on the other side of it. Then the ass, presenting himself with a great show of boldness at the brink of the gorge, made an effort to leap it, but in the course of his spring he fell right in the middle of the abyss, and there he remained suspended on a heap of uprooted timber, so that his fore part hung down on one side and his hind part on the other, thus leaving him in the greatest danger of breaking his neck. When the lion saw what had happened, he cried out, 'What is it you are doing, comrade?' but the ass, who for the moment had come to the end of his pow-

ers, made no reply. Whereupon the lion, fearing amain lest the ass should die, descended forthwith into the gorge and went to succour him. As soon as Brancaleone had been delivered from all pressing danger, he turned towards the lion with renewed arrogance, and heaped the most villainous abuse upon him that one creature could use to another. The lion, confounded beyond measure at what he heard, was filled with amazement, and demanded of the ass forthwith what might be the cause of this savage outburst of abuse, considering that he had, out of the love he felt towards him, saved him from death. Hereupon the ass, in order to show that he was in sooth greatly angered, answered haughtily, 'Wretched knave that you are! Do you ask me why I thus abuse you? I tell you that you have robbed me of the greatest pleasure I ever felt in the course of all my life. You indeed must needs fancy that I was dying, whereas all the time I was enjoy-

ing the purest delight.' Then asked the lion, 'And what was this great delight of yours?' The ass replied, 'I had bestowed myself carefully on the top of that wood, with one part of me hanging on this side thereof, and the other on that, desiring the while to learn for certain which part of me weighed the heavier, my head or my tail.' 'Now, I promise you, on my faith,' said the lion, 'that for the future I will not interfere with you on any account, and as far as I can see and clearly understand, you will surely be the lord and sovereign of this mountain.'

Thereupon they once more set forth, and after a time came to a river, very wide and swift in its current. Then said the lion, 'My good Brancaleone, I would that we should both of us now make an exhibition of our prowess by swimming over this river.' 'I could think of no trial which I would more readily undertake,' said Brancaleone, 'but I will ask you to take the water

first.' The lion, who was mightily expert as a swimmer, swam over the river with great dexterity, and, after he had crossed, he stood upon the bank of the stream and cried out, 'Comrade, it is now your turn to swim over.' The ass, when he perceived that he could in no way go back from his promise to face the trial, cast himself into the river, and swam in such fashion that, by the time he was come into the middle thereof, he was so greatly hampered by the whirling eddies of the water that he was borne along, now with his head uppermost, and now his feet, and sometimes sinking so deep in the stream that little or nothing of him was to be seen. The lion, looking upon this sight, and at the same time turning over in his mind the insulting words spoken by the ass, felt, on the one hand, that he dare not go to his rescue, and, on the other, the greatest fear lest he should be drowned if he were not succoured at once. Wherefore, standing in debate between yes and

no, he determined (let anything happen which might) to go to his aid; so, having plunged into the water, he swam up close to the donkey's side, and seized him by the tail, and dragged him along until he got him out of the water safe on shore. The ass, as soon as he found himself standing upon the river's bank and now in no danger from the threatening waves, flew into a violent passion, and, all inflamed with rage, cried out in a loud voice, 'Ah! wretch that you are, and loutish knave, of a truth I know not what holds me back from making play with my artillery and letting you have experience of something which you might not find entirely to your liking. You are indeed the plague of my life and the destroyer of all my pleasure. When, forsooth, unfortunate wight that I am, shall I find another delight as great as the one you have just taken from me?' On hearing this, the lion, now more overwhelmed with fear than ever, said, 'But, my good comrade, I

feared horribly lest you should be suffocated in the stream, wherefore I swam out to you and gave you my aid, thinking thereby to render you a service which would please you, and not an offence.' 'I bid you cease your prating at once,' replied the ass; 'but, first of all, there is one thing I want you to tell me. What gain, what advantage, have you reaped through your swimming across the river?' 'None at all,' answered the lion. Then the ass, turning towards him, said: 'Now look well here, and see whether, whilst I was in the river, I must not have found abundant diversion.' And with these words he shook himself violently, and straightway from his ears, which were filled with water, there came forth a great quantity of little fishes and of other small water-beasts, which he showed to the lion, saying the while in a tone of grief and complaint, 'Now do you see what a huge mistake you have made? If you had only allowed me to go down to the

bottom of the river, I should have had the greatest pleasure in capturing fish of a sort which would have made you stand aghast with wonder. Therefore, take care for the future that you molest me no more; for if you do we shall become foes instead of friends, and that assuredly will be the worse for you. Indeed, should I at any time appear to you to be dead, I do not wish that you should give yourself trouble on my account, forasmuch as that thing in me which may seem to you to be death will be in reality nought but contentment and life.'

Now the sun was already sinking beneath the horizon and making deeper and duskier the shadows on the earth, when the lion said to his companion that the time was now come when they ought to retire to rest, with the agreement that they should meet again on the following morning. And when another day had broken brightly the ass and the lion met as they had duly covenanted, and then and there settled that they would go to

the chase, the one in this quarter, and the other in that, and afterwards, at a certain fixed hour, they should both return, and whichever of the two should then be found to have taken the greatest number of beasts of the chase should be adjudged to be the lord and master of the mountain. Forthwith the lion went in search of game, and in his hunting contrived to capture a great quantity of wild animals; but the ass, having found standing open the gate of a farmyard, made his way into the same and came upon a vast heap of rye stacked in the midst of the court. He straightway went up to this, and ate thereof such a huge quantity that his belly had like to burst. After he had thus filled himself he returned to the spot where he had agreed to meet the lion, and lay down at full length, whereupon, through the crowding of his belly, his battery of artillery kept up a bombardment loud and long. It happened that a chough which was flying through the air above beheld the ass lying

prostrate upon the earth and moving not a limb, wherefore the bird concluded that he must be dead, and, having cautiously approached him, began to peck at his buttocks. The ass, as soon as he felt the sharp beak of the chough at work upon his hinder parts, gave a quick twist with his tail and caught the chough between it and his rump, and thus crushed the life out of him.

A short time after this the lion came back to the appointed place, charged with the prey he had captured, and when he beheld the ass lying prone on the ground, he cried out and said to him : 'See, good comrade ! here are the beasts of the chase which I have taken.' Then said the ass, 'Tell me now in what fashion did you contrive to capture them,' and the lion at once recounted to him what manner of venery he had followed. But the ass, breaking in upon his discourse, said, 'What a fool and witless loon you must be ! You have half killed yourself with fatigue this morning, ran-

ging round the thickets and the woods and the mountains, while I have never moved from this same place, and, as I lay upon the earth, have managed to catch with my tail and my buttocks such a vast quantity of choughs and of all sorts of animals that (as you may easily see) I have filled my carcass plentifully therewith. This one here is all I now have left, and this I reserved on your behalf, wherefore I beg that you will accept it as a mark of my high esteem.'

At hearing these words of Brancaleone, the lion was more stricken with astonishment even than before, and, having accepted the gift of the chough for the respect he had for the ass, took it, and without uttering another word returned to his own booty. Then, as he was making his way at full gallop through the forest (not without a certain fear in his heart), he met a wolf, who was also going along at a great pace. The lion hereupon said to the wolf, 'Goodman wolf, where are you going all alone and

so fast?' The wolf replied, 'I am bound on the execution of a certain business, which is of the highest moment to me.' Hearing these words, the lion sought to know what this business might be; but the wolf, as if he were in terror of his life, begged to be let go and not further delayed. Then the lion, perceiving the great peril into which the wolf was about to run, besought him earnestly that he would not go forward along that path; 'for,' said he, 'a little further on you will of a surety meet with Brancaleone, a very fierce and dreadful animal, who carries under his tail a certain piece of artillery which goes off with a mighty explosion, and ill-fated indeed is he who comes within its fire. Besides this, he bears upon his back a certain thing made of leather, which covers the greater part of his body. He is covered with grey hair, and works all manner of wonderful deeds, and is a thing of terror to all those who come near him.' But the wolf, who perceived clearly enough from the

account given by the lion what manner of animal this was concerning whom the lion spake, cried out, 'Good gossip, I beg you not to be at all afeard, for of a surety this one you speak of is nothing more nor less than a donkey, the vilest beast that nature ever made, and one fit for nothing else than to carry heavy burdens and to be well belaboured with the stick. I alone, in the course of my life, have eaten more than a hundred of this sort. Let us, therefore, go on together, good gossip, with assurance, and you shall witness the proof of all I say.' Then said the lion, 'Good gossip, I have indeed no mind to go with you, but if you feel that you needs must go, go in peace.' Hereupon the wolf once more replied that there was no reason why the lion should have fear of aught, and the lion, when he perceived that the wolf stood quite firm in his contention, said: 'Since you wish so earnestly that I should be your companion in this enterprise, and since, furthermore, you give

me full assurance that we shall run into no danger, it seems to me that it would be more prudent for us to approach him with our tails well knotted together, so that when we shall have come into his presence there may be no danger that one of us may run away and the other be left in his power.' Whereupon, after they had tied their tails tightly together, they issued forth to find Brancaleone.

The ass, who by this time had once more got up on his four feet and was cropping the grass, espied the lion and the wolf while they were yet far off, and straightway fell into such a fit of terror that he deliberated whether he should not take to flight. But the lion, who had pointed out Brancaleone to the wolf, said: 'There he is, good gossip. See, he is coming towards us. Let us not tarry here, for if we do, we shall of a surety both of us die.' The wolf, who by this time had seen the ass, and recognized what manner of beast he was, said: 'Let us stand our ground here some-

what, good gossip, and set your mind at ease, for I assure you that what we see over there is no other than an ass.' But the lion, whose fears seemed to grow greater every time he caught sight of Brancaleone, here turned tail and took to flight, and whilst he was thus fleeing through rough brambles and jumping now over one thicket and now over another, a sharp thorn struck him as he was leaping and tore out his left eye. When he felt the prick of the thorn, he at once imagined it to be caused by a shot from that terrible cannon which Brancaleone carried under his tail, and, coursing the while at the top of his speed, said to the wolf, 'Did I not tell you how it would be? Let us now fly for our lives. Do you not see that he has already shot out one of my eyes with his field-piece?' And quickening his pace every moment, he dragged the wolf along with him through sharp-piercing brambles, over scattered rocks, through thick woods, and other waste desolate places,

till at last the poor wolf, all mangled and shattered, gave up the ghost.

After running some long distance the lion, deeming that they had by this time come to a place of safety, said to the wolf, 'Good gossip, now it seems to me that we might well untie our tails,' but to this the wolf answered nothing, and the lion, looking towards him, saw that he was dead. Wherefore, stricken with amazement, he said: 'Alas! did I not tell you the truth when I said that he would kill you? See what has befallen us through going to meet him. You have lost your life and I have lost my left eye. But it is better to have lost a part than the whole.' Then, having untied the knotted tails, he left behind him the dead wolf and departed, dwelling hereafter in the caves of the rocks, while the ass remained lord and master of the mountain, upon which he lived joyfully for many years. And for this reason it happens that nowadays asses are always found inhabiting civilized and cultivated

regions, and lions in deserted and savage places, forasmuch as the common beast, by his fraud and cunning, proved himself to be the master of the ferocious lion.

The fable told by Arianna in such becoming wise here came to an end, and although it was somewhat indifferent in matter and wanting in strength,¹ still the fair and honourable company did not withhold their due meed of praise. And so that they might keep the same order which had been diligently observed upon every other evening, the Signora commanded her to set forth her enigma, and Arianna, without further hesitation, opened her lips as follows :

Rough, long, and round am I to sight,
Yet ladies find in me delight ;
They take me with a laughing face,
And find for me a fitting place.
They handle me in feately wise,
And put me where my business lies.
Next prick and pinch me, till I'm fain

¹ Orig., *positiva et di poco succo*.

To do their will once and again.
Now, ladies, if this thing you tell,
'Tis plain to me you know it well.

This enigma which Arianna propounded won praise far warmer than did her fable, for the reason that it gave much more occasion for laughter, and was, moreover, interpreted by the men in a somewhat lascivious sense. The damsel, when she perceived that their exposition of it went far wide of the truth, said: "Signori, what this enigma of mine is intended to describe is the staff upon which our ladies are wont to embroider with a needle lace or any other delicate work. It is round and thick, and they have to hold it between the thighs when they are at work therewith. They turn it, handle it, prick it with their needles, and do with it whatsoever they will." This subtle interpretation of the enigma was highly praised by the whole company, whereupon Alteria, as soon as she saw that all were silent and waiting for her, rose from her seat and thus began.

THE THIRD FABLE.

Cesarino di Berni, a Calabrian, quits his home in company with a lion, a bear, and a wolf, and coming to Sicily, finds the king's daughter about to be devoured by a monster. This beast, Cesarino, by the aid of his three animals, destroys, and gets to wife the princess, after having rescued her.

TN turning over the records of ancient and modern history I always remark that prudence holds a place as one of the most illustrious and noteworthy of the virtues with which human beings are endowed, for the man who uses prudence aright may call back his past experience and plumb the stream of current events, and, with his judgment matured thereby, provide for the future. Wherefore, seeing that I have to take my turn of story-telling this evening, I will give you a little fable which has been recalled to my

mind by the one recently told by Arianna, and, although it is neither very laughable nor very long, it may perchance conduce in some measure to your amusement and your profit as well.

In Calabria there lived not long ago a poor woman of low estate, who had an only son called Cesarino di Berni, a youth of great discretion, and one endowed more richly with the gifts of nature than with those of fortune. It chanced on a certain day that Cesarino left his home and went into the country, and, having come into a deep and thick-leaved forest, he made his way into the midst of it, enchanted by the verdant beauty of the place. As he went on, he came upon a rocky cavern, in which he found in one place a litter of lion cubs, in another a litter of bear cubs, and in another a litter of wolf cubs, and having taken one each of these, he carried them home with him, and with the greatest care and diligence brought them up together. The animals in course of time came to be so

much attached one to another that they could not bear to be apart, and, besides this, they had become so tame and gentle with the people of the house that they hurt nobody. But, seeing that they were by nature wild animals, and only domesticated by chance, and that they had now attained the full strength of maturity, Cesarino would often take them with him to follow the chase, and would always come back laden with the spoil of the woods and rejoicing at his good luck. Thus by his hunting Cesarino supported both his old mother and himself, and after a time the old woman, marvelling at the great quantity of game which her son always brought home with him, asked him by what means he contrived to entrap so fine a spoil, whereupon Cesarino answered that he got his game by the help of the animals which she must often have seen about the house. At the same time he begged her to be careful not to let this secret be known to anyone, lest the animals should be taken away from them.

Before many days had passed it happened that the old mother foregathered with a neighbour of hers whom she held very dear, not merely because she was a worthy upright woman, but because she was kindly and obliging as well. And as they were talking of this thing and that, the neighbour said: 'Neighbour, how is it that your son manages to take such great quantities of game?' And in answer thereto the old woman, forgetful of her son's warning, told her all she asked, and, having taken leave of her, went back to her home.

Scarcely had the old mother parted from her neighbour when the husband of the latter came in, whereupon the wife went to meet him with a joyful face, and told him all the news she had just heard from her old neighbour. The husband, when he had learned how the matter stood, went straightway to find Cesarino, and, having fallen in with him, thus addressed him: 'How is it, my son, that you go so often a-hunting, and never

offer to take a comrade with you? Such behaviour is hardly in agreement with the friendship which has always subsisted between us.' Cesarino, when he heard these words, smiled somewhat, but made no answer to them, and on the morrow, without saying a word of farewell to his old mother or to his well-beloved sisters, he left his home, taking with him his three animals, and went out into the world to seek his fortune.

After he had travelled a very long distance, he came into Sicily, and there he found himself one day in a solitary uninhabited spot in the midst of which stood a hermitage, which he approached, and, after having entered it and found it void, he and his three animals bestowed themselves to rest therein. He had not been there very long when the hermit to whom the place belonged came back, and when he entered the door and saw the animals lying there, he was overcome with terror and turned to fly. But Cesarino, who had watched the hermit's

approach, cried out: 'My father, be not afraid, but come into your cell without fear, because all these animals you see are so tame and gentle that they will in no way do you any hurt.' Whereupon the hermit, assured by these words of Cesarino, went into his humble cell. Now Cesarino was much worn out by the length of his journeying, and, turning to the hermit, he said, 'My father, have you here by chance a morsel of bread and a drop of wine you can give me to bring back a little of my strength?' 'Assuredly I have, my son,' replied the hermit, 'but not, perhaps, of quality so good as you may desire.' Then the hermit, when he had flayed and cut up some of the game he had brought in with him, put it upon a spit to roast, and, having got ready the table and spread it with such poor viands as were at hand, he and Cesarino took their supper merrily together.

When they had finished their meal the hermit said to Cesarino: 'Not far

from this place there lives a dragon whose poisonous breath destroys and annihilates everything around, nor is there found anyone in the country who can withstand him, and so great is the ruin he works that before long all the peasants of the land will be forced to abandon their fields and fly elsewhere. And over and beyond this, it is necessary to send him every day the body of some human being to devour, for, failing this, he would destroy everything far and near. By a cruel and evil fate the one chosen by lot for to-morrow is the daughter of the king, who in beauty and worth and goodness excels every other maiden now alive, nor is there aught to be found in her which is not worthy of the highest praise. Of a truth, it is a foul mischance that so fair and virtuous a damsels should thus cruelly perish, and she herself all the while free of any offence.'

Cesarino, when he had listened to these words of the hermit, thus replied: 'Let not your courage fail you, holy

father, and fear not that evil will befall us, for in a very short time you will see the maiden set free.' And the next morning, almost before the first rays of dawn had appeared in the sky, Cesarino took his way to the spot where the dreadful monster had made his lair, taking along with him his three animals, and, having come there, he beheld the daughter of the king, who had already been conveyed thither to be devoured by the beast. He went straightway towards her, and found her weeping bitterly, and comforted her with these words : ' Weep not, lady, nor lament, for I am come hither to free you from your peril.' But even as he spake, behold ! the ravenous dragon came forth with a mighty rush from its lair, and with its jaws open wide made ready to tear in pieces and devour the delicate body of the beautiful maiden, who, smitten with fear, trembled in every limb. Then Cesarino, stirred by pity for the damsel, took courage and urged on the three animals to attack the fierce

and famished monster before them, and so valiantly did they grapple with him that they bore him to the ground and slew him. Whereupon Cesarino, taking a naked knife in his hand, cut out the tongue from the throat of the dragon and put it carefully in a bag; then, without speaking a word to the damsel whom he had delivered from this horrible death, he took his leave and went back to the hermitage, and gave the holy father an account of the deed he had wrought. The hermit, when he understood that the dragon was indeed destroyed, and the young maiden set at liberty, and the country delivered from the horrible scourge which had lately vexed it, was wellnigh overcome with joy.

Now it happened that a certain peasant, a coarse worthless rogue of a fellow, was passing by the spot where lay stretched out the dead body of the fierce and horrible monster, and as soon as he caught sight of the savage fearsome beast he took in hand the knife which he car-

ried at his side and struck off therewith the dragon's head from the body, and having placed the same in a large bag which he had with him, he took his way towards the city. As he went along the road at a rapid pace he overtook the princess, who was going back to the king her father, and, having joined company with her, he went with her as far as the royal palace and led her into the presence of the king, who, as soon as he saw his daughter come back safe and sound, almost died from excess of gladness. Then the peasant with a joyful air took off the hat he wore on his head and thus addressed the king: 'Sire, I claim by right this fair daughter of yours as my wife, seeing that I have delivered her from death.' And having thus spoken the peasant, as a testimony of his words, drew forth from his bag the horrible head of the slain monster and laid it before the king. The king, when he beheld the head of the beast, once so fierce but now a thing of nought, and con-

sidered in his mind how his daughter had been rescued from death and his country freed from the ravages of the dragon, gave orders for universal rejoicings, and for the preparation of a sumptuous feast, to which should be bidden all the ladies of the city. And a great crowd of these, splendidly attired, came to offer to the princess their good wishes for her delivery from death.

It happened that, at the very same time when they were getting ready all these feasts and rejoicings, the old hermit went into the city, where the news soon came to his ears how a certain peasant had slain the dragon, and how as a reward for his deed and for the liberation of the king's daughter he was to have the damsel to wife. When the hermit heard this he was heavily grieved, and putting aside for the time all thought of seeking for alms, he returned forthwith to his hermitage and made known to Cesarino the thing he had just heard. The youth when he listened to this was

much grieved, and having brought forth the tongue of the slain dragon, he exhibited it to the hermit as a trustworthy proof that he himself had destroyed the wild beast. When the hermit had heard his story, and was fully persuaded that Cesarino was the slayer of the dragon, he betook himself to the presence of the king, and having withdrawn his ragged cowl from his head, he thus spake: 'Most sacred majesty, it would in any case be a shameful thing if a malignant rascally fellow, one for whom a hole in the ground is a home good enough, should become the husband of a maiden who is the very flower of loveliness, the example of good manners, the mirror of courtesy, and richly dowered with every virtue; but it becomes much worse when such a rogue seeks to win this prize by deceiving your majesty, and by declaring the lies which issue from his throat to be the truth. Now I, who am very jealous of your majesty's honour, and eager to be of service to the princess

your daughter, am come here to make it manifest to you that he who goes about making boast of having delivered your daughter is not the man who slew the dragon. Wherefore, O most sacred majesty, keep open your eyes and your ears likewise, and listen to one who has your welfare at heart.'

The king, when he heard the bold utterances of the hermit, was fully assured that the old man's words were those of faithful and devoted love, and gave heed to them forthwith. He issued orders at once that all the feasts and rejoicings should be countermanded, and directed the hermit to tell him the name of the man who was the true rescuer of his daughter. The hermit, who wished for nothing better, said: 'Sire, there is no need to make any mystery about his name; but if it will fall in with your majesty's wishes, I will bring him here into your presence, and you will see a youth of fair aspect, graceful, seemly, and lovable, gifted with manners so noble and

honest that I have never yet met another to equal him.' The king, who was already greatly taken with this picture of the young man, bade the hermit bring him into his presence straightway. The hermit, having gone out of the king's palace, returned to his cabin and told Cesarino what he had done.

The youth, after he had taken the dragon's tongue and put it in a wallet, went, accompanied by the hermit and the three animals, to the king's presence, and kneeling reverently on his knees, spake thus: 'Most sacred majesty, the fatigue and the labour were indeed mine, but the honour belongs to others. I and these three animals of mine slew the wild beast in order to set your daughter at liberty.' Then the king said: 'What proof can you give me that you really slew this beast, inasmuch as this other man has brought to me the head thereof, which you see suspended here?' Cesarino answered: 'I do not ask you to take the word of your daughter, which

would assuredly be an all-sufficient testimony. I will simply offer to you one token, of a nature no one can gainsay, that I and no other was the slayer of the beast. Examine well the head you have in your keeping, and you will find that the tongue is lacking thereto.' Whereupon the king caused the dragon's head to be examined, and found it without a tongue; so Cesarino, having put his hand in his bag, drew forth the tongue of the dragon, which was of enormous size — so great a one had never before been seen — and showed clearly thereby that he had slain the savage beast. The king, after having heard confirmation from his daughter, and on account of this production of the tongue by Cesarino, and divers other proofs which were offered, commanded them at once to take the villainous peasant and to strike off his head from his body. Then with great feasts and rejoicings the nuptials of Cesarino and the princess were celebrated.

When the news was brought to the

mother and the sisters of Cesarino that he had slain the wild beast and had rescued the princess, and that moreover the damsel had been given him to wife, they resolved to travel to Sicily, and, having taken passage in a ship, they were quickly borne thither before a favourable wind, and met with a very honourable reception. But these women had not been long in the land before they grew so envious of Cesarino's good fortune that they took thought of nothing else than how they might work his downfall, and their hatred, which increased day by day, at last stirred them to cause him to be privily murdered. Then, having considered in their minds divers deadly stratagems, they determined at last to take a bone and to sharpen the point thereof, then to dip the same in venom, and to place it in Cesarino's bed with the point upwards, so that, when he should go to rest and throw himself down on the bed, as is the wont of young people, he should give himself a poisonous wound. Hav-

ing thus determined, they set to work to carry out their wicked design forthwith. One day, when the hour for retiring to rest had come, Cesarino went with his wife into the bedchamber, and, having thrown off all his clothes and his shirt, he lay down on the bed and struck his left side against the sharp point of the bone. And so severe was the wound, that his body forthwith swelled on account of the poison, and when this reached his heart he died. His wife, when she saw that her husband was dead, began to cry aloud and to weep bitterly, and the courtiers, attracted by the noise, ran to the chamber, where they found Cesarino dead. Having turned the corpse over and over again, they found it inflated and black as a raven, and on this account they suspected that he had been killed by poison. When the king heard what had occurred, he caused the strictest inquisition to be made; but, having come upon no clue, he gave over the search, and, together with his daughter and the whole court,

put on the deepest mourning, and ordered the body of Cesarino to be buried with the most solemn funeral rites.

While these stately obsequies were being carried out, the mother and sisters of Cesarino began to be sore afraid lest the lion and the bear and the wolf (when they should find out that their master was dead) might scent out the treachery that had been used against him ; so, having taken counsel one with another, they hit upon the plan of sealing up the ears of the three animals, and they managed to carry out their design. But they did not seal up the ears of the wolf so close but that he was able to hear a little with one of them as to what had been going on. So, after the dead body had been taken to the sepulchre, the wolf said to the lion and the bear, 'Comrades, it seems to me that there is bad news about.' But these two, whose ears were completely stopped, could not hear what he said, and when he repeated the same words they understood him no better.

But the wolf went on making signs and gestures to them, so that at last they knew what he wanted to tell them, namely, that someone was dead. Then the bear set to work, with his hard crooked claws, and dug down into the lion's ears, deep enough to bring out the seal. And the lion did the same to the bear and to the wolf.

As soon as they had all got back their hearing, the wolf said to his companions, 'It seems to me as if I had heard men talking of our master's death.' And seeing that their master came not as was his wont, to visit them and to give them their food, they held it for certain that he must be dead. Whereupon they all left the house together, and came straight to the spot where the dead body was being borne to the grave. As soon as the priests and the others who were assisting at the funeral saw the three animals, they all took to flight, and the men who were bearing the corpse put it down and fled likewise, but some there

were of firmer courage who wished to see the end of the affair. Immediately the animals began to work hard with their teeth and claws, and before long they had stripped the grave-clothes off their master's body, and, having examined it very closely, found the fatal wound. Then the lion said to the bear, ' Brother, now is the time that we want a little of that grease which you carry in your inside; for if we shall be able to anoint our master's wound therewith, he will straightway recover.' Then answered the bear, ' No need to say another word. I will open my mouth as wide as I possibly can; then you may put your paw down my throat, and bring up as much grease as you will want.' So the lion put his paw down the bear's throat—the bear drawing himself together the while, so that he might be able to thrust it deep down¹—and when he had extracted all the grease he wanted,

¹ Orig., *che si ristringeva accioche più in giù la potesse ficcare.*

he anointed his master's wound therewith on all sides, and within and without. When the wound had become somewhat softened he sucked it with his mouth, and then thrust into it a certain herb the virtue of which was so potent that it immediately began to work upon the heart, and in a very short time rekindled its fire. Then Cesarino little by little recovered his strength and was brought back to life.

When those who were standing by saw this marvel they were struck with amazement, and straightway ran to the king to tell him that Cesarino was restored to life. The king, when he heard these tidings, went to meet him, accompanied by his daughter, whose name was Dorothea, and they embraced him and kissed him in the joy they felt over this unexpected ending of the affair, and with gladsome feasting and rejoicing led him back to the king's palace.

The news of Cesarino's resurrection soon came to the ears of his mother and

sisters, and disturbed them mightily ; nevertheless, feigning to be overjoyed thereat, they repaired to the palace to felicitate him with the rest ; but, as soon as they came into Cesarino's presence, his wound immediately threw out a great quantity of blood. On seeing this they were struck with confusion, and their faces turned pale, whereupon the king, growing suspicious of their guilt, bade his guards seize them and put them to the torture. Which having been done, they confessed all ; so the king forthwith commanded them to be burned alive, and Cesarino and Dorothea lived long and happily together, and left children to rule in their stead. The three animals, until they died in the course of nature, were tended with the utmost care and affection.

When Alteria had come to the end of her story, she gave her enigma in the following words without waiting for any further instruction from the Signora :

I bear myself a woman's name ;
A brother's presence near I claim ;
I live only by his death ;
I die, and he regains his breath.
Our way together never lies ;
From my pursuit he always flies.
Swifter than a bird's my way ;
No man ever made me stay.
At supper time you'll find me near,
Although no portion of your cheer.
Birth and death are with me ever,
Yet they hurt or harm me never.

Alteria's enigma was so clever and ingenious that no one could lay claim to the least notion of its meaning, save only she who had recited it. So when she saw that they could not bring their wits together enough to disentangle it, she said : " My enigma, ladies and gentlemen, is intended to represent the night, which has a woman's name, and has a brother who is called the day. When the day dies the night is born, and again, the night being dead, the day revives. She and the day can never go on their course together, and she flies like a bird,

never suffering herself to be captured. And again, she is always with us at supper time."

Everyone was pleased at this pretty interpretation of the subtle enigma, and it was declared by all to be a work of great learning. But in order to prevent the present night from flying away and being overtaken by the day, the Signora gave the word to Eritrea to go on with her story at once, and the damsel gaily began to tell the following fable.

THE FOURTH FABLE.

Andrigetto di Val Sabbia, a citizen of Como, being in articulo mortis, makes his will, and leaves his soul, together with that of his notary, and that of his confessor, to the devil, and then dies doomed to hell.

HERE is a well-used proverb that a bad end waits upon every bad life, and for this reason it is far wiser to live piously, as a good man should, than to

give a loose rein to one's conscience, and, without forethought, to work one's will unrestrained, as did a certain noble citizen who, when nearing his latter end, bequeathed his soul to the enemy of mankind, and then in despair (as was the will of divine justice) made an evil end.

In Como, one of the lesser cities of Lombardy, not far distant from Milan, there once dwelt a citizen called Andrigetto di Val Sabbia, who, though he was rich beyond any other man in Como in goods and heritages and land and cattle, paid so little heed to his conscience that he was ever prompt to rise early in the morning to undertake some fresh wickedness. His granaries were filled with all sorts of corn, the product of his farms, and it was his custom to peddle this away to the neighbouring peasants, in lieu of selling it to the merchants or to those who came with money in their hands; not being urged to this course by any compassion towards the poor,

but rather designing thereby to snatch away from them any little bit of land which yet remained to them, and add it to his own, seeking always to gain his end in order that he might, little by little, get all the land round about into his own possession.

One certain year it happened that the country was afflicted by a grievous famine, so that in many places men and women and children died of hunger, and for this reason peasants from all the neighbouring parts, both from the mountains and the plains, betook themselves to Andrigetto, this one offering to let him have a meadow, that one a ploughed field, and the other a track of woodland, in exchange for corn and other provisions to serve their present need. And the crowd of people about Andrigetto's house, coming from all parts, was so great that one might well have believed the year of Jubilee was come.¹

¹ Orig., *che pareva il giubileo*. An illusion to the vast crowds of people who flocked to Rome at the

There was living at that time in **Como** a notary, Tonisto Raspante by name, a man highly skilled in his calling, and one who far out-distanced all others of his craft in the address he showed in wringing the last coin out of the peasant's purse. Now one of the laws of **Como** forbade a notary to draw up any instrument of sale unless the money for the same should first have been counted over in his presence and in the presence of divers witnesses, and for this reason Tonisto Raspante, who had no mind to bring himself within reach of legal pen-

times of Jubilee in quest of plenary indulgence. Giovanni Villan, who went on one of these pilgrimages from Florence, declares there were never less than two hundred thousand strangers in Rome at these seasons; and Guglielmo Ventura estimates the total number of pilgrims in a Jubilee year at two millions. Dante (*Inferno*, xviii.) also refers to the enormous throng of Jubilee pilgrims in Rome:

"Comme i Roman, per l'esercito molto,
L'anno del Giubbileo, su per lo ponte
Hanno a passar la gente modo tolto;
Che dall' un lato tutti hanno la fronte
Verso 'l castello, e vanno a Santo Pietro,
Dall' altra sponda vanno verso 'l monte."

alty, had more than once remonstrated with Andrigetto when the old usurer had required him to draw up contracts of sale which were contrary to the form of the statute of Como; but Andrigetto would heap foul abuse upon him, and even threaten his life if he persisted in his refusal. And because the usurer was a man of weight, a leading citizen, and one moreover who frequented assiduously the shrine of San Bocca d'oro,¹ the notary dared not run counter to his will, but drew up the illegal contracts as he was commanded.

Just before the advent of a certain season when Andrigetto was wont always to go to confession, he sent to his confessor enough good cheer to give himself a sumptuous feast, and fine cloth enough to make hose for himself and

¹ Orig., *et correva continuamente San Bocca d'oro.* *Bocca d'oro*, a greedy lover of money. *San Giovanni Bocca d'oro*, coin or money given for a bribe, also a lewd manner of living. See the legend of the saint in Busk's "Folk-lore of Rome," p. 196, and Masuccio, "Il Novellino," i. 6.

for his servant as well, bidding him at the same time to keep himself in readiness on the morrow at the confessional. The priest, for the reason that Andrigetto was a man of wealth and of great weight in the city, took due heed of these words, and when he saw his penitent approaching made him dutiful obeisance, and prepared to receive his confession ; whereupon Andrigetto, kneeling down and charging himself narrowly with divers transgressions, at last stumbled upon the sin of avarice, and laid bare in detail the history of all those illegal contracts he had made. The priest, who had read enough to know that these contracts were unlawful and usurious, began respectfully to take Andrigetto to task, pointing out to him that it was his duty to make restitution ; but Andrigetto, who took this interference in very ill part, replied that the priest knew not what he was talking about, and that it behoved him to go and learn his duty. Now it was Andrigetto's habit often to

send presents to the priest, who, fearing he might lose custom should the usurer resort to some other confessor, forthwith granted him absolution, with a light penance therewith, and Andrigetto, having thrust a crown into his hand, took his leave and departed with a light heart.

It chanced that soon after this Andrigetto was smitten with a malady so severe that he was given up by all the physicians. His relations and friends, perceiving by the report of the doctors that his disease was incurable, urged him to make his will, to regulate his affairs, and to confess himself according to the ways of all good Catholics and Christians; but he, who was altogether given up to avarice, and was accustomed night and day to think of nought else than how he might pile up more riches, took no thought of death, and put far away from him all those who would talk of such matter, causing rather to be brought to him now this and now that of his prized possessions, and taking delight in the

handling thereof. But his friends were very pressing on his account; so to content them he let them summon Tonisto Raspante, his notary, and Messer Pre Neofito, his worthy confessor, in order that he might confess and settle his worldly affairs. When these two had come into his presence they saluted him, and asked him how he was, and prayed to God to give him back his health, exhorting him at the same time to take courage, for with God's help he might soon be himself again; but the sick man replied that he felt much worse, for which reason he desired now to make his will and to confess. Then the priest, turning his discourse to matters of faith, admonished him that he should be mindful of God and bow to His holy will, by which means there would be granted to him the restoration of his bodily health. This done, Andrigetto directed them to bring in seven men to be witnesses of his will. When these were come he said to the notary, 'Tonisto,

how much do you charge for every will you draw?' 'The law allows us a florin,' Tonisto answered; 'but we receive sometimes more, sometimes less, according to the wish of the testator.' Then Andrigetto went on: 'See, here are two florins, which I give you on condition that you set down everything I direct you to write.' The notary agreed to these terms, and, having invoked the name of God, and inscribed the year, and the month, and the day, according to the manner of his calling, began to write in these terms: 'I, Andrigetto di Val Sabbia, being of sound mind though infirm of body, bequeath and recommend my soul to God my creator, whom I thank with all my heart for the many benefits which He has showered upon me during this life.' But Andrigetto, interrupting him, said: 'What is it you have written there?' whereupon the notary replied, 'I have written this and that,' and told him word for word what he had set down. Then Andrigetto, in a passion

of rage, cried out, 'And who told you to write in such terms? Why do you not keep the promise you made me? Now write down what I tell you—I, Andrigetto di Val Sabbia, infirm of body but sound in mind, bequeath and recommend my soul to the devil of hell.' The notary and the witnesses, when they heard these words, stood aghast, and, turning to the testator, said to him: 'Alas! Signor Andrigetto, what has become of your good sense and your ordinary prudence? Surely these are the words of a madman. Have done with such folly, for the love of God, as well as with such sins against your good name, which must bring scandal and disgrace upon all your family. Remember also that all those who up to this time have rated you as a wise and prudent man will set you down as the most wicked and mischievous traitor nature ever brought forth, if you thus cast behind you all your well-being and salvation; and, indeed, if you thus despise your

own welfare and profit, how much more will you despise the welfare and profit of others!' In answer to this Andrigetto, whose rage was now as hot as a burning brazier, replied, 'How? have I not commanded you to write exactly what I shall tell you, and have I not paid you beyond your due to do this?' To this question the notary replied affirmatively. 'Then put down,' said the testator, 'the things I tell you, and not those I have no mind for.' The poor notary would fain have been quit of the whole business,¹ seeing how savage was the old man's humour; nevertheless, fearing lest he might die in a fit brought on by his anger, he wrote all that was dictated to him. Then said Andrigetto to the notary, 'Write this—Item, I leave to the devil also the soul of Tonisto Raspante, my notary, in order that I may have company when I depart from this world.' 'Ah, Messer Andrigetto,' cried the notary, 'you are

¹ Orig., *che vorebbe esser digiuno.*

doing me a great injury, and putting an affront on my honour and good name.' 'Go on with your writing, rascal,' cried the testator, 'nor trouble me more than I am troubled already. I have given you double fee to write according to my wish; so write as I shall direct you — For if he had not so readily endorsed my knavish suggestions, and drawn up so many unlawful and usurious contracts, but had driven me from his presence forthwith, I should not now find myself taken in this snare. And because in time past he set more store on my payments to him than on my soul, or his own, I once more give and commend him to Lucifer.'

The poor notary, fearing that yet worse might befall him, wrote down all the foregoing words, and then Andrigetto went on: 'Write now — Item, I bequeath now the soul of Pre Neofito, my confessor, to be tormented by sixty thousand devils.' 'What is this you say, Signor Andrigetto?' interrupted the

priest. ‘Are these the words of a sober man such as you have always been held to be? Good God, recall what you have said. Know you not that our Lord Jesus Christ is merciful, with arms of pity always open, provided that the sinner be convinced of his offences, and repents and acknowledges his transgressions. Acknowledge, therefore, the grave and enormous sins you have committed, and pray God for His mercy, and He will plentifully pardon you. The means are at hand, and you have yet time to restore what you have of other men’s goods; and, if due restitution be made, God, who is all merciful and willeth not the death of a sinner, will pardon you, and receive you into paradise.’

Then Andrigetto answered, ‘Wicked apostate priest, destroyer of my soul and of your own as well, man full of greed and simony! Fine counsel this, to give at such a time! Write, notary—I consign his soul to the centre of

the pit ; because, had he not been such a pestilential avaricious knave, he would not have been ever ready to absolve me from my sin, and then I should not have committed so many offences, nor should I find myself brought to my present state. What? does it seem honest and fitting that I should now strip myself of my wealth, ill-acquired though it be, and leave my children vagabonds and poor? No! keep counsel such as this for those whom it may profit. I will have nought to say to it. And, notary, write this also— Item, I leave to Felicita, my mistress, my farm in the village of Comacchio, in order that she may be furnished with sustenance and raiment, and be able, from time to time, to take pleasure with her lovers as she has always done hitherto, and, when her life shall be finished, to come to me in the pit of hell and be tormented eternally with us three. And as to all my other goods, personal or otherwise, present or to come, I give them to my two legitimate sons, Co-

modo and Torquato, exhorting them to waste nothing of my estate in paying for masses, or matins, or vigils, or de profundis on my behalf, but rather to pass their time in gambling, wenching, drinking, brawling, fighting, and in all other nefarious and detestable courses, so that my goods, having been badly gotten, may in brief time be spent in like manner, and that my sons, when they shall be left bare, may hang themselves in despair. And this I declare to be my last will, and I call upon you all to witness it.'

When the will was written and executed, Andrigetto turned his face to the wall, and, with a roar like that of a bull, gave up his soul to Pluto, who had long been waiting for it. Thus the wretched sinful man, unconfessed and impenitent, made an end to his foul and wicked life.

When the gentle Eritrea had brought her story to a close, the whole company stood amazed at the folly, or rather the malice, of the wretched Andrigetto, who

held it better to be the slave of the devil and the foe of the human race than to repent of his sin. And because the night was already somewhat advanced, Eritrea, without tarrying for the Signora's order, propounded her enigma :

I am supple, round, and white,
A good span's length will gauge me right ;
If ladies to their service bind me,
Searching and alert they'll find me.
Give me but place, and lend a hand,
I'll enter and I'll take my stand.
But touch me not, on mischief bent,
Or dirty fingers you'll lament.

“ It seems to me, Signora Eritrea, that your enigma can mean nothing else than the consigning of a soul to the devil,” said Bembo, with a sly look ; “ but take care the devil get not into a certain warm place I know of, for then there may chance to ensue a conflagration.” “ I have no fear of that,” said Eritrea. “ Besides, my enigma has in no way the meaning you give to it.” “ Then expound to us the meaning at

once," quoth Bembo, "and put an end to our perplexity." "Willingly," said Eritrea. "It signifies simply a tallow candle, which is white, and round, and not very hard, and if it be set up in the lantern, which is feminine in gender,¹ there is plenty of room for it to stand. Moreover, no one ever yet handled a tallow candle without getting dirty fingers."

Now the crowing of the cocks proclaimed that midnight was already long past, so the Signora made sign to Cateruzza to complete this night, the tenth of their pleasant entertainment, by the telling of some graceful story and witty enigma; and she, who was ever more ready to speak than to keep silent, began her story in these terms.

¹ Orig., *che ha nome di femina*.

THE FIFTH FABLE.

Rosolino da Pavia, a murderer and a thief, having been captured by the officers of the Podestà, is tortured, but confesses nothing. But afterwards, when he sees his innocent son put to the question, he straightway confesses, whereupon the prætor grants him his life, but banishes him the country. Rosolino becomes a hermit, and thus saves his soul.

HOW great may be the ardent and clinging love of a father towards a right-minded and well-conducted son no one can fully understand save the man who has children of his own, for the father not only strives to give the child everything that may be necessary for his bodily sustenance, but will often put his own life in jeopardy, and shed his blood for the exaltation and enrichment of his son. This saying I will prove to you to be true in the short fable which I propose now to relate to you; and, as

this story will rather move your pity than your laughter, I think it will be of no little service for your instruction and learning.

In Pavia, a city of Lombardy famous both as a seat of learning and as the spot wherein is buried the most holy corpse of the venerable and divine Augustine, the smiter of the heretics, the lamp and effulgence of the Christian religion, there lived, not a great time ago, a certain lawless and wicked man, a murderer and a thief, one prone to every evil deed, and known to men by the name of Rosolino. And for the reason that he was a rich man, and the head of a faction,¹ many citizens attached themselves to him and followed him. Whenever he took to the road, he despoiled, and robbed, and killed, now this man, and now that. Besides this, the whole region round about held him in great dread on account of the numerous following he had. Though it happened

¹ Orig., *capo di parte*.

that Rosolino was the author of so much wrong-doing, and though many complaints were lodged against him, nevertheless there was not a single citizen gifted with courage enough to prosecute him, for so powerful was the countenance and protection granted to him by divers knavish and evil-minded men, that the complainants, much against their will, were almost forced to abandon any process they might have taken against him.

This man had one child, a son who in his nature was the complete opposite to his father, and led a life pure and worthy of all praise. Often, with soft and loving words, he would reprove his father for his wicked and ungodly life, and gently beseech him that he would now make an end of his nefarious career, drawing for him pictures of the yawning gulfs of peril amongst which he continually moved. But, to tell the truth, the wise and dutiful admonitions of the son proved to be altogether fruitless and

vain, seeing that Rosolino only applied himself every day more assiduously to his infamous calling, and every week it was reported that such and such a man had been robbed, or that such and such a man had been killed. Wherefore, seeing that Rosolino was obstinately set in persevering in his ill courses, and becoming day by day more barbarous and wicked, it pleased God that he should at last be captured by the officers of the prætor, and led back to Pavia securely bound. Being brought before the judges, he was accused of all manner of premeditated wickedness, but all the charges brought against him he impudently denied.

After the prætor had listened to his words, he straightway commanded the officers to bind Rosolino with strong chains and to throw him into prison, at the same time directing that he should be carefully watched, and allowed for his sustenance three ounces of bread and three ounces of water a day. At this

point there arose a great contention amongst the judges whether or not they should now condemn him upon the charges against him ; but, after spending much time in wrangling, it was decided by the prætor and his court that Rosolino should be put to the torture in order that by this means they might extort a confession from his mouth. When the following morning had come, the prætor commanded his officers to bring Rosolino into his presence. He laid before the prisoner once more the charge against him, and he was once more met with a complete denial of the same. The prætor, perceiving what the fellow's humour was, gave orders that he should at once be bound for the strappado,¹ and then hoisted up on high. But, although Rosolino's frame was several times cruelly shattered by the tormentors, they were unable to make

¹ *Orig, che fusse alla corda legato.* The strappado was chiefly used as a military punishment. The offender was drawn up to the top of a beam and then suddenly let fall.

him confess anything concerning his offences ; nay, rather, with the most robust courage he cried out, heaping all manner of abuse upon the prætor and upon his court. He declared they were wretches, thievish knaves and villains, adding that they themselves deserved the gallows a thousand times on account of the evil lives they led, and on account of the injustice they worked as administrators of the law. Not content with this, he went on to assert that he himself was a man of worth and good life, and that no one in the city could with justice bring any charge against him.

The prætor, after having taken the severest measures with Rosolino over and over again, and having left untried no form of torture in order to make him confess, found that he could extract nothing from the prisoner, who stood as firm in his resolve as a solidly-built tower, and mocked at the efforts of his torturers. This thing caused the prætor great trouble ; because, although he was well as-

sured of Rosolino's guilt, he could not condemn him to death unless he should first confess. It happened that during the night, while he was reflecting upon the wickedness of Rosolino's nature, and likewise considering his steadfast determination, he found himself at fault, because he could not use any farther torments upon him, seeing that he had already cleared himself of the charges¹ while under torture. Therefore he determined on the morrow to assemble his court and propose a certain course of action which I will now explain to you.

When the following day had come, and the court had met, the prætor addressed the other judges, and said: 'Excellent and learned sirs, of a truth the courage and firmness of Rosolino, the accused, is very great, but we must not forget that his villainy is greater still, and that he would rather die under torture than confess to any of the charges made against him. Therefore it seems

¹ Orig., *per haver già purgato ogni inditio.*

to me expedient (supposing that you all are of my mind) that we should, as a last resource, make trial of a certain method, which is this: Let us send our officers to fetch Bargetto, the son of Rosolino, and then, in the presence of the father, put the son to the torture. Then, when Rosolino shall see his innocent son under the hands of the tormentors, he will readily enough confess his crimes.'

This proposition of the prætor's won the approval of the rest of the court; wherefore the prætor at once gave command that Bargetto should be seized and bound and brought into his presence. When this had been done, and Bargetto haled before the prætor, the latter preferred certain charges against him¹ and Bargetto, who was innocent of all crime, made answer that he knew nought of the matters of which they spoke. The prætor, when he heard this, straightway caused him to be taken to the torture chamber, and then, after he was stripped

¹ Orig., tolse il suo constituto.

naked, he was put to the question in the presence of his father. Rosolino, seeing that they had taken his son a prisoner, and were now delivering him to torments, stood as one confounded, with his heart sharply wrung with grief. Thereupon the prætor (with Rosolino present all the while) commanded that Bargetto should be hoisted up on high, and, this done, he began to put many questions to the youth, who, being entirely innocent, knew not what to answer thereto. Then the prætor, feigning to be greatly angered, said, 'I will soon let you know what I mean,' and with these words he gave command that Bargetto should be strung up still higher. The wretched youth, who now felt the greatest pain and anguish, cried out in a loud voice, 'Have mercy, signor prætor, have mercy, for I am innocent, and have committed none of these crimes!' Thereupon the prætor, hearing him lament and weep in this fashion, said, 'Confess then forthwith, and do not let yourself be thus torn in

pieces. We know all from beginning to end, but we wish to hear the facts from your own mouth.'

To this Bargetto answered that he had no knowledge of what the prætor was talking about, and that there was no truth in the charges that were made against him. Hereupon the prætor, who had already instructed the chief torturer as to what he should do, made a sign to him to let Bargetto fall from top to bottom without mercy. Bargetto, on account of the words of the judge, and of the agony which he suffered in his arms, feeling, moreover, that he could not endure any torture sharper than that which he now felt, made up his mind to confess to any crime they might charge him with, although he might be entirely innocent thereof; so he cried out, 'Sirs, let me come down, and I will confess everything in full.' Then, when the cord had been relaxed little by little, and Bargetto stood once more in the presence of the prætor and his court and of his own father, he

confessed that he had indeed committed all the crimes which were laid to his charge.

Rosolino, as soon as he listened to the false confession of his son, took counsel with himself concerning what had been done, and at last, stirred up by love of his son, and by the spectacle of his innocence, said, 'Sirs, I beg you torture no more this son of mine, but let him go free, for he is innocent, and I am guilty.' Then, without being put farther to the question, Rosolino confessed his crimes one and all.

The prætor, after he had listened to the confession of Rosolino, and had caused it to be fully written down and ratified, said to the prisoner (as he was very curious to know the cause which had led him to confess), 'Rosolino, you endured the sharpest torture with great courage, and for a long time we were unable to extract any confession from you, but as soon as you saw your son Bargetto put to the question, and heard

the confessions made by him, you changed your mind, and, without being put farther to the torture, you confessed all your crimes. Now, if God will give you grace, and have mercy upon your soul, I would gladly learn what was the reason of this change in your purpose.' 'Ah!' replied Rosolino, 'is it possible that your worships cannot divine this?' The prætor said, 'Of a truth we cannot.' Rosolino answered, 'If it is indeed true that you know it not, I will tell it to you, if you will deign to lend me your attention. You, noble sirs, merciful humane men and lovers of justice, you have seen and had exhibited to you clear proof of my endurance under torture; but this was nothing to marvel at, because then you were torturing what was nothing else than a dead body. But when you put Bargetto, my only son, to the question, I then felt you were torturing a living thing.' Then said the prætor, 'You must be a dead man yourself if you say that your flesh is dead.' 'No,' replied

Rosolino, 'I am not dead; neither is my flesh dead, but living; because when you put me to the torture I suffered nought, for the reason that this flesh which you now see (the same you tortured a short while ago) is not my flesh at all, but the flesh of my dead father, decayed and already fallen to dust. But when you set to torment my son, you tormented my own flesh, because the flesh of the son is verily and indeed the flesh of the father.'

When the prætor heard this reasoning of Rosolino, he was powerfully moved to grant him free pardon for all his offences, but because justice would not suffer that such great crimes as his should go unpunished, he decided to send him into perpetual banishment; not, indeed, that his wickedness deserved a punishment so light as this, but because of the love which as a father he bore to his son. Rosolino, when it was made known to him how light a sentence had been passed on him, lifted his hands to heaven and

gave thanks to God, promising Him with many oaths to put off his evil ways and live a holy life. Rosolino straightway departed from Pavia, and betook himself to a certain hermitage, where he passed a life of great sanctity, and did so great penance for his sins that, by the grace of God, he was held worthy of salvation, leaving a memory which from that time to this present day has been serviceable as an example for the good and as a warning to the wicked.

When Caterizza's fable was finished, the Signora directed her to let follow her enigma at once, and the damsel, with a gentle voice, spake thus :

In a flowering meadow green,
A lovely gentle thing is seen ;
Gorgeous are its robes to view,
Bright with yellow, green, and blue.
It wears upon its head a crown,
And proudly paces up and down ;
Its splendid train it raises high,
And seeks its love with jealous cry ;
But gazing at its feet below,
It shrieks aloud for shame and woe.

Caterizza's enigma was understood by the greater part of the company to refer to the peacock, the bird dedicated to the goddess Juno, which, with its feathers studded with eyes, and painted in various colours, gazes round about upon all, and bears itself proudly, but when it beholds its soiled and muddy feet, it lets down its gorgeous tail and stands stricken with shame.

As soon as the enigma had been explained, all the company rose to their feet and took leave of the Signora, promising her that they would all return on the following evening according to their wont.

The End of the Tenth Night.



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Here endeth the Third Volume.





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